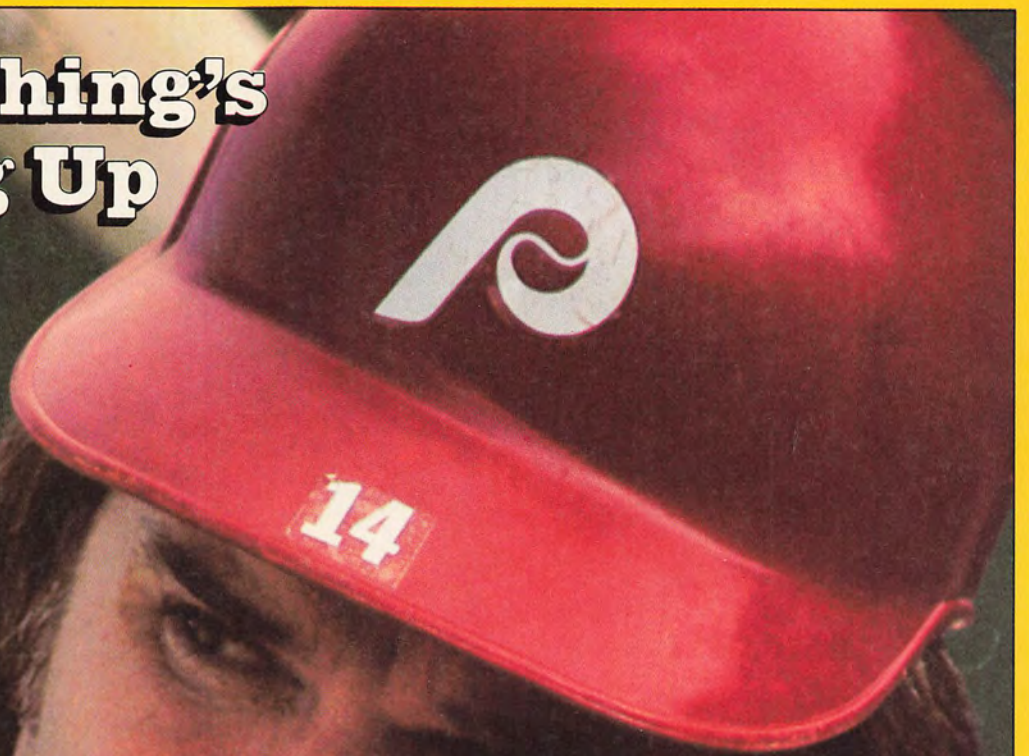


INSIDE

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CARBURETOR GETS 200 MPG!

BY R.C. WEBSTER

WASHINGTON—Establishment of a new world record for fuel economy—an incredible 1,368 miles per gallon achieved in the Shell Motor Mileage Marathon by a special three-wheel vehicle with 90cc engine—has touched off a stampede among car manufacturers and tinkerers to drastically increase the gas mileage of cars.

They are attempting to achieve this by means of the Pogue Carburetor, a device which the Ford Motor Co. has shown can deliver over 200 mpg to an ordinary sedan. This gas-miserly carburetor has never been mass-produced.

The Pogue is covered by several patents issued by the U.S. Patent Office here, but a recent book asserts that the patents are invalid, that anyone can now build the Pogue without legal restraint.

As a result, vendors, parts manufacturers and entrepreneurs are racing to mass-produce this peerless fuel conserver.

The book, *Secrets of the 200 MPG Carburetor*, contains full details, instructions and diagrams on how to construct the Pogue. It states that anyone can build the carburetor, even in a home workshop. Copies are available from Premier Distributing, P.O. Box 404-IS, New York, N.Y. 10019, at \$4.95 (plus \$1 to cover the costs of postage and handling; total, \$5.95).

The Pogue Carburetor is named for its inventor, Charles N. Pogue, now 81 and ailing in a Winnipeg, Manitoba, nursing home. Pogue is making no attempt to prevent others from producing and marketing his invention.

205 MPG

The Ford Motor Co. of Canada, in a test documented in *Secrets of the 200 MPG Carburetor*, proved that the Pogue Carburetor does indeed achieve a remarkable 25.7 miles per *pint*—or 205 miles per gallon.

Allan Wallace, author of *Secrets of the 200 MPG Carburetor*, says the Pogue's gas mileage is not all that remarkable.

He contends that others have invented carbu-

retors with exceptionally high gas mileages, too, but that the American people have been kept in the dark about them by the oil companies in order to preserve gas sales.

To support his assertion, Wallace documents several instances of stupendous gas mileages, including 84 mpg achieved by Ralph Moody Jr. of Oak Hill, Fla., with a Ford Capri, and 100 mpg by Thomas W. Ogle of El Paso, Texas, with a Ford Galaxie.

Wallace says he has amassed enough case histories "to fill a set of volumes the size of an entire encyclopedia." He includes construction details for the most interesting and feasible systems in his book.

"I feel the public has a right to know how to produce its own high-mileage systems," he says. "If enough people are tooling around in 100-mpg cars, the auto and oil industries will have no choice but to offer fuel-efficient carburetors in all production models."

80% FUEL WASTE

Wallace says the average car burns only 20 percent of the fuel it consumes. The rest is lost, unburned, and is emitted through the tailpipe to pollute the atmosphere.

All successful high-mileage carburetors drastically increase the percentage of fuel vaporized and burned. "There is no reason why the average car's 20 percent can't be increased to 80 percent," Wallace asserts.

"The carburetor of today is little changed from what it was 50 years ago," he says. "I'm hoping that my book will spur a change—to the benefit of the nation, the ecology, and the consumer."

To obtain a copy, readers of this magazine need merely send their name and address with \$4.95 (plus \$1 for postage and handling; total, \$5.95) to Premier Distributing, P.O. Box 404-IS, New York, N.Y. 10019.

This book is sold with a guarantee of satisfaction or your money back, and is most enthusiastically recommended.

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INSIDE SPORTS

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MAY 1982

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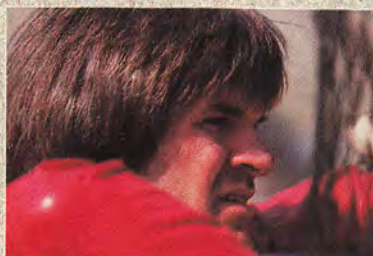
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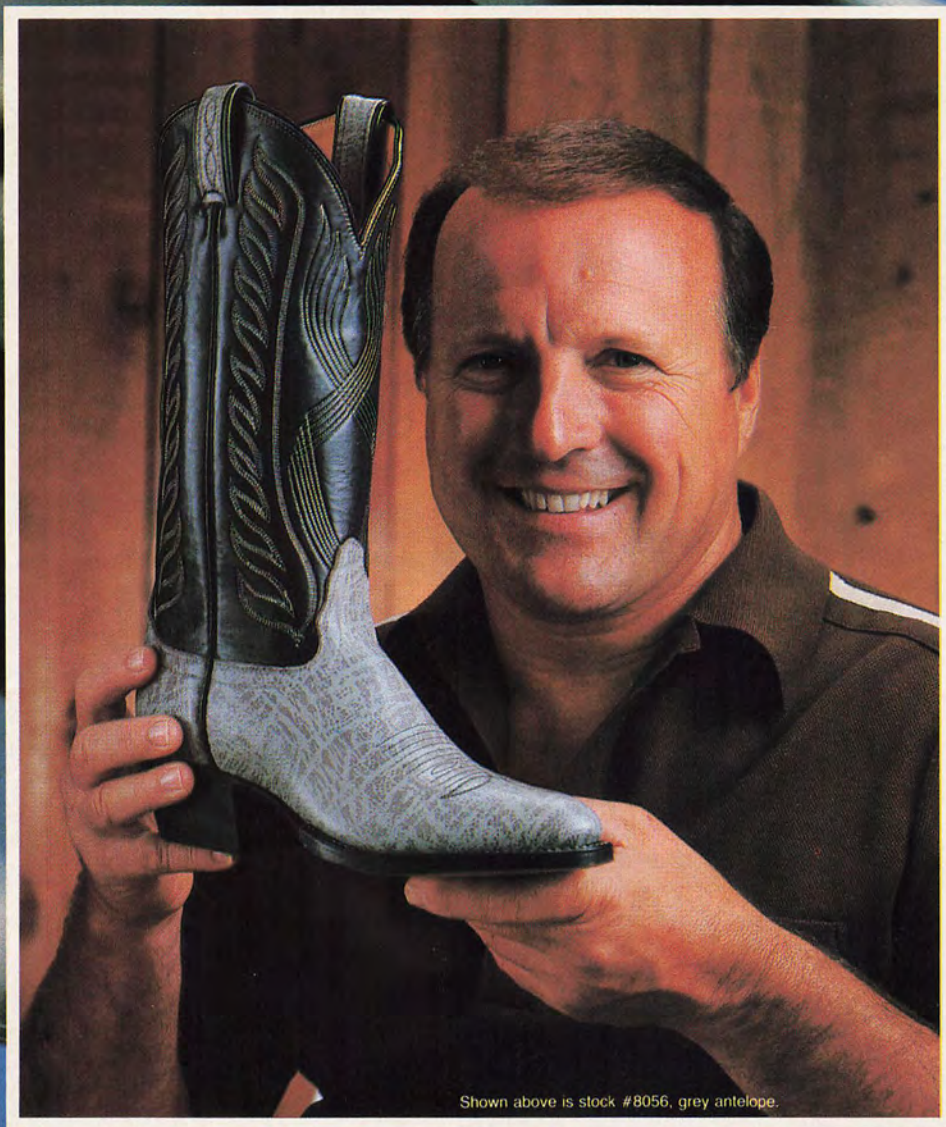
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COMEBACKS

EDITED BY ELLEN DONATO

Gerry Cooney isn't too nice to fight ["Kid K.O.," March]; he is just too dumb to realize that he can't. There should be at least some speculation in his mind as to why his managers don't let him fight someone under 32, let alone a top 10 contender. Cooney should be nicknamed "Inactive." The reason he has fought only three times since 1979 is simple: His managers know that Gerry isn't that good and as long as they can keep him under wraps and make people believe he is so great, they'll make a bundle every time he fights an oldtimer with a name.

Calvin Fussman's article is wrong. The cruelest punch will be Holmes' right cross, which will KO this creature of the media in less than 10 rounds. Anyone want to bet?

TOM CASTRO
Santa Ana, California

Thoroughly enjoyed Joe Flaherty's article on Gerry Cooney. I'm only a casual follower of boxing, due largely to the fact that most boxers are arrogant, selfish, egotistical and pampered. However, Cooney is a breath of fresh air in our polluted atmosphere. It's nice to know there are still athletes who put "give" in front of "take."

WILLIAM CULP
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Loved John J. McClain's "Heavy-weight Trivia Quiz" [March]. To the 10 fighters Ali fought who held world titles add an 11th—Jimmy Ellis.

Gotcha.

FRANK STEVI
Huntington Beach, California

Nineteen pages on boxing in March? You can't be serious. Twenty-five hundred-plus words on the left hook ["The Cruellest Punch"]? Pass Mr. Fussman the smelling salts.

Put me on that long list of IS readers who think there just ain't enough there to write about. If two of IS' best-selling issues were boxing issues, it's no wonder the mag almost went down for the count.

There is a need for a quality sports

magazine and your writing and art direction are treading that ground. Just don't let boxing get too big for its corner. There are plenty of sports out there worthy of a shot at the title page.

MATT MOODY
Aptos, California

Upon reading Ron Powers' "Media" column, "Hamlet ... Going Long ... The Pass ... He Scores" [March], once again your magazine caused me to howl so uncontrollably I fell off my couch! Keep it up and you folks will have to pay my chiropractor bill. Pray, let that not curb your continuing publication of such fine articles.

PATRICK NAGEL
Portland, Oregon

You can say all you want about Dean Smith and his fabulous Tar Heels ["The Relentless Scrimmage of Dean Smith," March]. True, he is a good coach and North Carolina always seems to have good basketball teams, but really good teams don't have to rely on stall-ball to win.

Coach Smith's slowdown type of basketball shows me that he does not have the confidence in his players to maintain a lead late in a game.

They say the ACC is one of the toughest conferences. It may be tough but it's not exciting, and with the slowdown, it can be downright boring.

BOB CRAWFORD
Cascade, Maryland

There's a sports fan in America who wants something more. You probably won't notice him at a sporting event. No, he's not the one with school colors painted on his face. Don't confuse him with the maniac mercilessly booing the freshman quarterback who just threw his third interception.

It would be a mistake, however, to interpret his mild demeanor as a lack of interest or enthusiasm for the game. Nay, he's enjoying the game but he's also wondering how last year's starting quarterback, a senior this year, is re-

acting to being upseated by that flashy freshman phenom. And that assistant coach whose father has been indicted by the grand jury, can Xs and Os be on his mind at this time?

At last this fan can rejoice, for out of that vast wasteland of pulp called sports magazines has emerged a fine magazine with insight and sensitivity second to none: INSIDE SPORTS.

JOHN ALBANO
Metairie, Louisiana

I enjoyed reading about the greatest fullback ever, Larry Csonka, in the March "Update." However, in his 12 years as a pro, Csonka rushed for 8,502 yards, 1,344 more than mentioned. You forgot to include his yardage with the Giants.

MIKE OFFER
Sandusky, Ohio

I have been an avid reader of INSIDE SPORTS since its beginning. I especially enjoy your coverage of hockey, which is the best by a national sports magazine. Your March issue was no exception. The section on Bob Bourne in Stephen Singular's "Coping" was the most heart-warming story about professional sports I have read.

PAUL HEMMING
London, Ontario

It appears that the Chicago Cub fans got the "Best Fans" award ["Boos and Coups," March] because of their immense loyalty despite continuous losing seasons. But why are the Bengal fans runners-up? These "fans" had to be begged to fill the stands in the beginning of the season when the team looked so-so. These are also the "fans" who up until Super Bowl time, spent more time worrying about whether or not Johnny Bench had a hangnail than they did about the well-being of the entire Bengal team. But, boy oh boy, did these "fans" jump on the bandwagon once it was headed for the Super Bowl.

Best fans? Come off it, guys.

LINDA BRUCE
Indianapolis, Indiana

BY CHARLIE LEERHSEN

Ken Norton

Every time he is tempted to recall his encounter with Gerry Cooney last May, Ken Norton thinks about something else for . . . oh, about 54 seconds. "If I dwelled on that loss it would bother me," he says. "So I put it out of my mind. It's not difficult because I'm so busy these days."

Except for the raspy voice that betrays his years in the ring, Norton now is very much the businessman. He arrives at his Los Angeles office at 8:45 each morning and spends most of the day managing his portfolio of real estate and oil investments. "I own apartment houses in L.A. and have some other holdings in Reno and Las Vegas," he says. "I've always got something to buy, sell or check out." Still, he quits promptly at three each afternoon to pick up his five-year-old daughter, Kenisha, at school.

Norton and his wife, Jackie, also have three sons: Kenneth Jr., 15, Brandon, 11, and Kene, who was born last September. Count them among the Future Non-Boxers of America. "Fighting's a no-no as long as I'm paying the bills," dad says. "I've already spoken to my eldest boy about it. He's a B-plus student and he's got better things to do, like be a quarterback or a lawyer." Norton sees himself in a similar position. "I don't think about boxing again, even a little. There's no bad feelings, but I've got other plans."

Chief among these is the resurrection of the movie career that began, and halted, with *Manáingo* and its sequel, *Drum*. To that end, Norton takes classes two evenings a week in the Beverly Hills studio of acting teacher Milton Katselas. "My agent is looking around and I'm going to be getting some roles soon," Norton predicts. "I'd like to play a cowboy who shoots old folks, young folks . . . everybody!"

In the upcoming Holmes-Cooney fight, Norton picks the champ. His



Norton: Managing his portfolio

reason, though, sounds sentimental: "I've really gotten to like Larry. We didn't used to be that friendly, but now we are." He also sees himself getting closer to three-time opponent Muhammad Ali, who moved into a house in Los Angeles that is a 15-minute drive from Norton's. "We run into each other at various functions and we talk," Norton says. "I've come to understand the difference between the man and the legend."

But some things don't change. Asked if he'd finally end the controversy surrounding his age, Norton first responded with a long pause. Then he said, "Thirty-five and holdin'."

Moeller High

He served anonymously under Gerry Faust for 13 years, but his loyalty and dedication did not go unrewarded: When Faust left for Notre Dame in late 1980, Ted Bacigalupo moved up to become the head football coach at Cincinnati's Moeller High. It had to be considered a dream job; the suburban Catholic school was a genuine dynasty after compiling 174

wins, 17 losses and 2 ties under Faust. Moreover, Bacigalupo inherited 18 assistants, 20 student managers, 7 team doctors—and the unflagging attention of the local media. Yet after leading Moeller to a 12-1 record during his one season, he recently resigned to devote more time to his used-golf-ball sales and retrieval company, which he calls Bachi's Balls. "It was strictly a business decision," says Bacigalupo, 36, who still teaches physical education at Moeller. "I didn't have enough time for both the team and my outside interest."

Used-golf-ball retrieval is not so glamorous as it sounds. "What I do, basically," says Bacigalupo, "is contract with local clubs to remove balls from the water hazards. Then, since it's just me and my wife, Rita, in the business, I go in myself and get them." Sometimes he wades in and picks up the balls by hand, but when the water is deep he dons his scuba-diving gear. "In the 20 years I've been doing this, I've found some strange things down there, including a motorcycle, a mailbox and some hockey pucks," he says.

The defeat Moeller suffered last year was its first since 1978, but Bacigalupo insists that losing 13-0 to Canton McKinley in the state championship game did not precipitate his departure. "That was the media's idea," he says. He also denies rumors that he will "surface" in a college post next fall. "The money for an assistant coach in college isn't really better than what you can make in high school—and my golf-ball business has been going good." In any event, the Moeller program is now in the hands of Steve Klonne, who last year served as defensive coordinator.

Faust reportedly was surprised by Bacigalupo's decision to become the Lloyd Bridges of the links. "At first I think Gerry didn't know what to say," recalls a member of Moeller's athletic staff. "But then he praised coach Bacigalupo for his courage." ■

CHARLIE LEERHSEN is a Newsweek associate editor.

INSIDE TRACK

When INSIDE SPORTS contacted Rick Mears to arrange this interview, he was asked how long it would take to drive from Los Angeles to his home in Bakersfield.

"About two and a half hours," he said. "But I can make it in an hour and 45 minutes."

There is little doubt that he can. Mears, 30, is accustomed to getting places in a hurry. He was the United States Auto Club's rookie of the year in 1976; became the second-youngest driver to win the Indianapolis 500 in 1979, and has won two national driving championships in the last three years.

Since joining Roger Penske's team in 1978, Mears has won 14 races and his earnings total \$1,111,429. He won six last year after suffering second- and third-degree burns around his nose and eyes in a pit fire 58 laps into the Indianapolis 500. While preparing to return to Indianapolis in May, Mears was interviewed by Randy Harvey of the *Los Angeles Times*. It took Harvey more than an hour and 45 minutes to get to Bakersfield.

IS: What is it like to drive a championship car 200 miles per hour?

RICK MEARS: When you're going that speed, you're covering the length of one football field a second. You have 8 to 10 seconds between corners. That's how long you have to remember how you approached that corner the last time because you want to do it the same way every time. As soon as you get through one corner, you start thinking

'You'd think Indy would be better prepared ... I didn't expect to stand and burn for 35 seconds.'



Rick Mears

about the next. You have to know whether the line you are making around the racetrack is high or low or in between. You have to know how your car is operating. You have to watch the guys you're racing against. You have to know how their car is running and what their line is and how

they're approaching the corners. It's a tremendous mental strain and there are no timeouts or halftimes.

IS: With the Indianapolis 500 only weeks away, you can't help but think about the fire. What happened?

RM: I had taken the lead a lap or two before and went in for a pit stop to refuel. When we finished, the nozzle at the end of the fuel hose stuck open. Methanol sprayed all over the car. As soon as I felt it pouring over my head, I knew I was in trouble.

I knew I was on fire while I was still in the car, but I didn't feel it until after I got out. I could feel my face burning, but that didn't bother me as much as the fact I couldn't breathe. The fire was going under my facemask. Every time I inhaled, I inhaled flames. I couldn't get my helmet off. I didn't panic, but I thought I was going to.

IS: Didn't you have help?

RM: I've got pictures of me standing at the front of the car. There was me, the car and room at both ends. There was nobody else. If I couldn't have gotten out of the car, nobody would have been able to get close enough to do anything for me. I would have been history.

IS: No one else knew you were on fire?

RM: One of the problems with methanol, which is the fuel used in championship cars, is that you can't see it burn. You know how you light a candle and the wick stays white? That's what happened to my suit. There

really wasn't one mark on it.

I ran to one of the firemen, but he dropped his extinguisher and took off. Maybe I caught him on fire. My wife, Dina, could tell from my actions that I was on fire and tried to get to me, but, fortunately, she was held back. One of my sponsors came out and tried to help me take off my helmet, but he burned his hands and had to back off. Finally, my father came into the pits, picked up an extinguisher and put me out. He was the only one who was thinking straight.

IS: The fireman actually ran away?

RM: You know the firemen at Indy don't wear fireproof suits? They're volunteers. It's a lunch-box deal that gives you a free ticket to the race. They don't have the proper equipment. They're not experienced. It shouldn't be that way, but I can't blame the fireman. He was there in a thin nylon shirt, cotton slacks and street shoes. If I didn't have a fireproof suit, I would have done the same thing.

IS: Is it true that you and two members of your crew who were burned had to walk a quarter of a mile to the hospital?

RM: We didn't receive any medical attention in the pits. There was no ambulance. No nothing. I still don't know why. I finally took off, walking.

IS: Are you bitter?

RM: Not bitter, disappointed. You'd think Indy would be better prepared, it's such an important race. I've done a lot of talking about it because I hope they'll do something better this year. But the only comment I've heard from the Indianapolis Speedway is, "The Penske people started the fire, and we put it out." But, by God, I didn't expect to stand and burn for 35 seconds before somebody put it out. Besides, they didn't put me out. My dad did.

[Editor's note: Fueling regulations have been tightened this year at Indianapolis and other tracks as a result of the Mears fire.]

IS: Less than five weeks after the fire, you won two 125-mile races on the same day in Atlanta. You only missed one race. Were you apprehensive when you got back?

RM: The rumor was that I was going to retire, but that never crossed my mind. I'm just starting my career. What happened at Indianapolis was a freak accident. It happened in the pits, not on the track. The only adjustment it caused me to make was that I started coming into the pits slower than normal. I told my crew not to worry about the time. I wanted them to do

everything smooth and easy until we could get our confidence back. They were more leery than I was.

IS: Are you ever afraid in a race car?

RM: After a close call, your knees are shaking and your legs are wobbly. But that's what keeps you coming back. If it didn't scare you, it wouldn't be so exciting.

IS: Did you feel that way lying in a hospital bed after Indianapolis?

**What's the
use of running
ahead of
everybody all
day if you can't
even finish?**

RM: You may not believe this, but it was a relief. You see one accident after another, guys crashing all the time. I went for so long without anything happening to me. I knew I couldn't be that lucky forever. After the fire, I was relieved because I figured I'd had mine for a while. I'm not saying I won't be involved in something else, but at least something finally happened.

IS: You're known as a conservative driver. You never even spun a championship car until after you had won at Indianapolis in 1979. Your cars seldom break down. Where did you develop your philosophy?

RM: Desert racing taught me to worry first about getting to the end of the race. What's the use of running ahead of everybody all day if you can't even finish? I spend the first half or the first three-fourths of a race trying to finish and the last fourth trying to move to the front. I like to save the car for when it's needed.

IS: With 14 victories the last four years, this has obviously worked.

RM: At Watkins Glen last year, Mario Andretti ran off with the lead and Al Unser ran off. Pretty soon, they were sitting by the side of the road. I knew how long the race was going to be and what kind of punishment the car was supposed to take. It

was a good thing, too, because when we were rolling the car out of the victory circle, the rear end locked up. If I had pushed it harder, we never would have finished.

IS: Doesn't that run contrary to the macho image racers are supposed to have?

RM: It's an ego thing with some drivers. The Unsers, Andretti, Johnny Rutherford, they think they have to run up front because of who they are. You see it at Indy when the three guys on the front row race to see who can get through the first turn first. You're taking an awful risk of blowing something because your car's not warm yet and you've still got 500 miles to go.

IS: Do any of the other drivers resent the way you win races?

RM: They're all smart enough to know it's working. It amazes me that more of them haven't tried it, but I hope they never do.

IS: Are there times when you would like to be a charger?

RM: There are a lot of times when I pace myself and I break anyway. As far as anybody knows, I wasn't even in the race that day because I never ran up front and I didn't finish. It makes you want to go out in the next race and stand on it the first thing. If I could run up front all the time and still do what we've done, I would do it.

IS: You seem to have an ability to know how far you can challenge your car without it breaking. Was this something you had to learn?

RM: The first championship car I drove, the crew chief said it was almost like I could communicate with the car. He said there are race car drivers who drive cars and there are race car drivers who drive race cars. Some guys can't tell you what the car is doing. But I have a feel for the equipment. That makes it easier for the mechanics to know what's wrong.

I always liked anything with wheels. My dad raced in the Midwest. He quit when I was 5, but I guess I had been around it enough for it to get in my system. When I was 10, I started racing slot cars against guys who were a lot older. They had a tough time handling me being that young and beating them. I remember this tournament where the team that won got a trip to San Francisco. This team wanted me because they knew I could win the trip for them, but after we won they wouldn't let me go because I wasn't old enough to get into the bars. I was 12 or 13.

IS: When did you start racing for real?

RM: When I was 15 or so, I started racing motorcycles. My mother didn't like it because she was afraid I was going to get hurt. So my dad took me to the sprint-buggy races at Ascot in Gardena and told me that if I'd give up motorcycles he'd build me a buggy. We built the buggy and started racing at Ascot. My brother, Roger, and I went every weekend and took about 100 people from Bakersfield with us.

IS: At what point did you decide to make it your career?

RM: I never even dreamed of getting into an Indy car until about six months before I got in one. I was working in construction and figured I'd just race on weekends. In 1976, Bill Simpson of Simpson Safety Equipment asked me to come to Willow Springs and test his Formula 5000 car. By the end of the day I had run the third-fastest lap that had ever been run there. We signed a contract for me to drive his Formula 5000 and Indy cars. In my first championship race, at the Ontario 500, I finished eighth. Everything just snowballed from there.

IS: Less than two years later, Roger Penske asked you to join his team, the break of a lifetime for a young driver.

RM: He offered me a parttime deal, guaranteed me six to eight races. Indy was guaranteed. I didn't say yes right away, but there was never any doubt.

IS: Why you?

RM: He liked that I could stay out of trouble and run consistently. He also thought I could deal with the public and the media. To use his word, I was saleable.

IS: In 1978, your first year driving for Penske, you qualified for the front row at Indianapolis. Several other young drivers said they could have done the same if they had been driving for Penske.

RM: There might have been a little resentment when I started to run quick and run up front. But most of the guys accepted I was going to be there.

IS: Penske has a reputation as a demanding boss.

RM: He's hard to work for if you're not getting it done. He will never lie. He tells you what's on his mind. But he has never put pressure on me. When I went to work for him he said to run with what's comfortable, just get in the show and get experience. He was a driver himself and understands it takes time to learn.

IS: What do you do for recreation?

RM: I like the outdoors. I look for things I can do with the family. We have a motor home that we take to the

beach on weekends when I'm home. We've all got three-wheelers. I built one for myself and bought two for my boys. They're seven and nine. It gives them a sense of responsibility to take care of them. It's also good for their timing and coordination. It's the same thing my parents did for me.

IS: Is there anything you do that doesn't involve wheels?

RM: I enjoy playing golf. I just

**On the track,
Foyt's the
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and in control.**

broke 90. The first time I played was at the drivers' tournament in 1978 in Indianapolis. There's a course in the speedway infield. Six months later, I shot a hole in one. Skill had nothing to do with it. Golf is frustrating, but that's what I like about it. I duff a lot of shots before I hit a good one. It takes self-discipline and concentration. That's what racing is about.

IS: After being named co-rookie of the year at Indianapolis in 1978, you won the race in 1979. Were you ready?

RM: I thought we could win it in 1978, the first year. That's how confident I was in the equipment. The second year, I *knew* it could happen. But I thought it still was too soon.

IS: Did winning Indianapolis gain you respect from other drivers?

RM: I think I was already recognized as a driver who wouldn't do anything stupid, but also wouldn't back down to anybody. I was in one race early on when A. J. Foyt was rolling around the track and wanted everybody to get out of his way. I said, "To hell with that, he'll have to go around like everybody else." He didn't say anything to me after the race, but he told my crew chief he'd put me in the fence if I did anything like that again. But before the next race, he apologized and said he'd nearly taken

us both out. What's funny about Foyt is that on the track he's the opposite of his image. He's always calm and in control. I'm never nervous about running against him.

IS: Is there anyone who makes you nervous?

RM: I don't want to get into that.

IS: How about Johnny Rutherford? Other drivers have complained about him.

RM: He's the opposite of Foyt. Off the track, Foyt is seen as the bad guy and J. R. is the all-American boy. On the track, it's the other way around. I've run around Foyt time after time. But I always give Rutherford three or four more car lengths than the normal driver.

IS: Who do you consider the five or six best drivers in championship racing?

RM: Andretti is one of the toughest. Gordon Johncock. Rutherford. Tom Sneva is very quick. Foyt, when he runs. He doesn't run as much as he used to. Danny Ongais runs good.

IS: Who is the best?

RM: Andretti, I guess. There are so many things he's done in championship cars and Formula One ... He won the World Driving Championship.

IS: Then it must have been particularly satisfying for you to pass Andretti on the final turn to win the Michigan 150 last September?

RM: That's when I do the racing, give the extra 10 percent, when it counts. I just got down under him on the fourth turn. He knew I was down there pretty good. He was trying really hard to stay low, but I was down even lower.

IS: Is that because you were willing to take more of a risk than he was?

RM: Not at all. My car was working down low better than his. I knew that. So did he.

IS: Who is the best up-and-coming driver in championship racing?

RM: I'd have to go with my teammate, Kevin Cogan. He was third at Phoenix in his first race for Penske. He's got a very good feel, which is important in an Indy car. He's definitely going to keep me honest.

IS: Now that Bobby Unser has retired and you are Penske's No. 1 driver, what is next?

RM: I want to win Indy again. I won the driving championship in 1979, but it was more satisfying to win it the second time last year because it proved I wasn't a flash in the pan. I want to win another Indy to establish myself there. ■

The Baseball Bunch: Diamond in the Rough

BY RON POWERS

Kids are the uninvited audience for TV sports. Since they tend not to be major consumers of steel-belted radials or Macho shave, their presence in front of the tube on Saturday and Sunday afternoons (to say nothing of Monday nights) has not, historically, been a prime shaper of sports programming styles.

And yet perhaps nowhere else in television is there a more natural affinity—sports being primarily fantasy, kids being primarily fantasy factories.

I think about this sometimes during baseball season—baseball being the sport most congenial to childhood—when I indulge a guilty pleasure by flipping my TV dial to an undeniably slick, ferociously packaged and yet irrepressible half-hour confection called *The Baseball Bunch*.

The Baseball Bunch hits the Count Chocula-clogged airwaves on the weekend in 70 markets—78 per cent of the country—for 24 weeks during the baseball season. Syndicated by Major League Baseball Productions, it is, inevitably, Big Baseball's official, regulation, pre-assembled fantasy ideal of itself. (It is also the only regular, noncable sports show aimed exclusively at children.)

The well-scrubbed stars of *The Baseball Bunch* do not concern themselves with the summer game's mere,



how does one put it—ribald, chawtobacco, Billy Martin aspects. They behave more like the Bad News Bears might behave after emerging from an Up With People sensitivity marathon: slightly glassy-eyed, but enthusiastic.

The show's week-to-week premise goes something like the following: What if a wholesome bunch of baseball-happy kids, whose ethno-gender distribution would satisfy the most fanatical affirmative-action warden (and who just happen to include a leavening base of *child actors*), got together in a tree-shaded park in Tucson, Arizona, every Saturday for a little ball, along with the Chicken, Johnny Bench in

full uniform, several other major leaguers who just happened to be wandering by and a magical chalkboard that had a tendency to dissolve into the face of Tom Lasorda wearing a jeweled turban?

Right away you begin to understand that this is not *Ball Four* we are dealing with. This is not *Bang the Drum Slowly*. This is suburbo-baseball fantasia in the full, cool grip of video, with all its peculiar blend of ultra-tech visual packaging and Norman Rockwell sensibilities that have marked kid-video since *Scooby Doo*.

On a typical episode, we may find the Bunch out on the field, in the midst of a snappy pickup game. The Chicken—I told you this was fantasia—has just drilled a hot grounder to

deep short and is now prancing comically around the bases. But an alert Buncher comes up with the ball and calls out, in the time-honored tradition of acid-tongued infielders, "Sorry, Chicken—you're a dead duck!"

A rundown ensues. (There is an enormous amount of running around on *The Baseball Bunch*.) Finally, the Chicken scampers far outside the basepath, then slides into second base, well under the tag of an aspiring young soap-opera queen. Harold, the Buncher who's acting as umpire (and grinning winsomely all the way), calls the Chicken out.

This prompts a "rhubarb" so spirited and so chipper that only the sudden, entirely coincidental appearance of host Bench

in his Cincinnati Red uniform can restore the Bunch to order.

"Hey, hey, hey, quiet down," admonishes Bench—quickly reaching the outer limits of strong language on the show. The Bunchers respectfully snap to and Harold explains that, well, no one really tagged the Chicken out, but he ran 'way around the baseline. "And the rulebook sez—if you do that, *yer out!*" (Winsome jerking of thumb by the kid umpire.)

"Well," muses Bench, "I've got *Sparky Anderson* here! Let's get an official ruling!"

Confiscate my Froot Loops if it isn't so. The camera pulls back to reveal the

doughty Detroit skipper himself. Anderson doesn't bother to explain why he happened to be strolling along a Tucson city park in uniform—eccentricities of dress are not that rare on Saturday children's TV, and anyway, Anderson looks almost corporate standing next to a man in a yellow chicken suit. Instead, he launches right into the spirit of things.

"Great call. He's out. But I'll tell you what," says Sparky, starting to amble along in kiddie television's best there's-a-lesson-in-here-somewhere style, "I was watching the play all the way, and there were a lot of other mistakes made. Harold's call stands. But I'll tell you one thing: *The Baseball Bunch* needs a lot of work on the rundown play!"

Even a jaded, grizzled adult kibitzer like yours truly senses that this is the cue for some good ol' *Major League Baseball Productions* stock footage! Sure enough: "Show us the way major leaguers do it, Sparky," cries out a towheaded moppet—and as the Bunch gathers 'round, and the low diaphanous murmur of videotape technicians wafts in the background, Sparky grins and gets that faraway look in his eyes: "Well, Louie, the major leaguers don't always do it right. That's why managers get—white hair!"

Now the Tucson park somehow dissolves before that One Big Monitor Screen that seems to hover like a federation starcruiser over all of video America. And while the Bunch amuses itself wholesomely with comic vignettes of big league stars forgetting to pick up ground balls before they throw to the wrong base (accompanied by the banjo music that always signals Hi-Jinks Aplenty), I find myself groping backward into the airwaves Saturday days of my own kidhood.

In those Westinghouse summer mornings of Ike's first term, a kid watching TV sports had to gird himself up mentally for entering a video enclave run by, and for, *adults*. Not only was there no *Baseball Bunch* to pipe us into the right mood—there were no commercials built around Coke-chugging stars who flung their sweat-soaked jerseys in little kids' faces. There were no public-service spots showing 20-game winners being pals to ghetto kids.

There was no Chicken.

In short, television hadn't yet learned the knack of domesticating the big-time stars, of insinuating them into the make-believe Friendly American Family that now presses in upon us like an endless Lite beer reunion—

nudging us to think of Dick Butkus as a cuddly uncle.

Did I say we had no Chicken? We had a Parrot. Sharpie the Gillette Parrot. But Sharpie was no glad-hander; he made appearances only on state occasions—All-Star Games, World Series and Friday-night fights.

More to the point, he was an *adult* Parrot, being preoccupied to the edge of obsession with how we viewers were fixed for blades. Gillette Blue Blades (it seems somehow necessary to ap-

**An alert
Buncher calls
out, 'Sorry,
Chicken—you're
a dead duck.'**

pend), I mean.

But, then, that was the way things were. *Adult*. In those days, a 13-year-old didn't just walk up to the Westinghouse and switch on *Game of the Week* cold. The knowledgeable pint-sized fan worked up to it, carefully. We improvised our own *Baseball Bunch*, in a manner of speaking.

My pal Duly and I, for instance, went through a ritual Saturday-morning-airwaves warmup as studied as a big league player's infield drill. We would hit the radio band for a few hours, starting out with *Let's Pretend*, then moving on over to a session with Froggie the Gremlin ("Plunk your magic twanger, Froggie!") before tapering off with a few minutes of Galen Drake. By the time that Falstaff logo appeared on the TV screen in the afternoon, superimposed on Yankee Stadium, the essential qualities of kid programming and sports had somehow fused in our minds. We were ready to internalize the sawtooth cadences of Dizzy Dean and Pee Wee Reese, as the starting pitcher—usually Bullet Bob Turley, for some reason—wheeled adultly through what Diz called his "p'lim'nary warmup tosses."

Things are changing now. In some video sports they are changing more rapidly than in others. You can't exactly call the National Football

League telecasts an extension of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* (although a case could be made for Phyllis George as the ultimate Football Mama), and the National Basketball Association games likewise seem to ignore the sensibilities of small viewers (they are, after all, played by very tall people).

It is the summery, sunshine games—baseball, tennis—in which television seems to have opened its point of view, however tentatively, to include children. ("You Little Leaguers out there, if you're thinkin' about copyin' Yastrzemski's stance..." is a phrase almost umbilically connected to Joe Garagiola, whose instinctive sense of small fry ranks among his redeeming virtues.)

Bench, like Garagiola, seems to have this unstudied rapport with kids—a great many of his exchanges with the Bunch are ad-libbed. That's a good thing, considering that dialogue involving kids is almost impossible to write and usually comes out sounding tinny and hoked-up (vis: "Sorry, Chicken—you're a dead duck!").

Bench has the knack for moving the program's standard elements along seamlessly: impromptu game situation, discussion of baseball technique, execution of technique, horsing around. *The Baseball Bunch* avoids the all-too-common kid-vid mistake (observable on just about any Hanna-Barbera cartoon production) of making the small viewer feel he has stumbled into a session of grown-up in-jokes.

Not that baseball's motive is entirely altruistic here. Perhaps more than any other big-time sport, baseball is wooing the family into the stands. Today's *Baseball Bunch* fan is tomorrow's paying customer.

Still...

"All right, rundowns *can* be confusing," Johnny Bench is owning up on the TV screen, and the Bunch gathers 'round for what surely will be an Object Lesson. He and Sparky Anderson proceed to fling themselves into a flailing, scrambling, sweaty demonstration of how they're done right. And my adult suspicions disappear like a Chicken avoiding a tag. With all its scripted cuteness and rehearsed charm (why are child actors always so good at beaming?), *The Baseball Bunch* manages to extend a kind of grace, a welcome, toward kids that I wouldn't have minded feeling from my Westinghouse. Back in the days of that smart-ass Parrot. ■

RON POWERS is a television-and-radio critic who received a Pulitzer Prize.

As we've been saying, you couldn't find a better whisky
if you stood on your head.



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From Short To Second to Verse

BY DONALD HALL

Everybody knows "Casey at the Bat," that ritual humiliation of the hero. Before radio killed the practice of public recitation, everybody knew it by heart. "Oh! somewhere in this favored land"—our foremothers and forefathers boomed out Ernest L. Thayer's bumpety meter—"the sun is shining bright... / And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout; / But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has Struck Out."

Despite the omnipresence of Casey, few fans of baseball or of poetry seem to have noticed that baseball has always been the preferred sport of American poets. And the association started early, long before Abner Doubleday supposedly invented the game. The earliest poem, with the base called a "post," is the anonymous:

*The Ball once struck off
Away flies the Boy
To the destin'd Post
And then Home with Joy.*

It seems to be baseball; actually we know little about the eighteenth-century game. (It is typical of baseball scholarship that *Baseball Diamonds* dates these lines 1787; that Charles Einstein in *The Baseball Reader* ascribes to the poem a patriotic year, albeit with some skepticism: "Supposedly printed in 1774"; that H. L. Mencken attributes it to *A Little Pretty Pocketbook*, published in 1744.)

When Henry Wadsworth Longfellow attended Bowdoin in 1824 he wrote in a letter about playing "ball"—presumably "town ball," which was baseball's general ancestor, with resemblances to cricket and to the English game of Rounders.

Among baseball's early fans was the greatest American poet, Walt Whitman. In 1846 while he was still a journalist, a decade before Ralph Waldo Emerson heralded *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman wrote prose about baseball for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. The modern game was just starting, and in his lifetime Whitman lived to see baseball become national under standard

rules. Soldiers in the Civil War were known to play during lulls and while in prison camps, which spread the game and gave credence to the canard that a Union general invented it. In the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855, in "Song of Myself," the great game found its place in a Whitman sampler of pleasures: "Upon the race-course, or enjoying pic-nics or jigs or a good game of base-ball..." (Whitman doubtless pronounced it, as people did until the 1920s, with the two syllables evenly stressed.)

When he was old and ill in 1889, and the Chicago White Stockings returned to the United States from a tour, the good gray poet remarked to a friend, "Did you see the baseball boys are home from their tour around

the world? How I'd like to meet them!" The same friend also reports that Whitman's conversation featured baseball metaphors: A great success was "a home stroke," and that someone liked to catch things "on the fly."

Among the modern poets, doubtless the most famous fan is Marianne Moore, who lived in Whitman's borough and who cheered the Brooklyn Dodgers. She noticed and admired details of the game, such as Roy Campanella patting Don Newcombe's rump. Her baseball poems came late in her work; literary critics have been unkind to "Baseball and Writing (After Listening to Post-Game Broadcasts)" and "Hometown Piece for Messrs. Alston and Reese," with its couplets:

*Ralph Branca has Preacher Roe's
number; recall?
and there's Don Bessent; he can
really fire the ball.*

It is less known that Moore's interest began in her youth. When she was a young woman with red hair coiled on top of her head she was celebrated among her poet-friends for the range of her erudition. The doctor-poet William Carlos Williams (author of a poem called "At the Ball Game") won a wager with a friend who bet he could discover a subject about which Ms. Moore knew nothing. The friend took her to the Polo Grounds on a Saturday afternoon. When Moore persisted in



ILLUSTRATION BY STEVEN MAX SINGER

discussing poetry while a pitcher began throwing strikes, her companion asked if she knew who was pitching. Moore reportedly replied: "I take it it must be Mr. Mathewson. [It was.] I've read his instructive book on the art of pitching." (*Pitching in a Pinch* was reissued a few years back.)

The connections between poetry and baseball are infinite. When Roger Kahn wanted a title for his lyrical revisitations with old Dodgers, he came up with a line by Dylan Thomas: "I see the boys of summer in their ruin." Robert Frost's boyhood hero was Cap Anson, and Frost alludes to baseball in "Birches," among other poems. As an old man, he wrote one of his rare pieces of prose to celebrate baseball for *Sports Illustrated*.

Professors teach courses in "Sports Literature." Students face textbook Suggestions for Discussion and Writing, such as "Explain 'Dream of a Baseball Star' by analyzing the imagery in the dream," or "Thomas Jefferson said, 'Games played with a ball stamp no character on the mind,' an opinion generally supported by the findings of psychologists. Do such findings invalidate the views of . . . Robert Frost and Marianne Moore?" These suggestions are among those included in *The Sporting Spirit*, subtitled "Athletics in Literature and Life," edited by Robert J. Higgs and Neil D. Isaacs.

In books such as *Sports Literature*, edited by John Brady and James Hall, Robert Wallace makes an elegant little poem about the double play. Ogden Nash rigs out an alphabet from players' names. Robert Francis does brief, exact lyrics on pitchers and base-stealers; and the poets keep at it: Carl Sandburg, John Updike . . . not to forget F. P. Adams with his rhyme on "Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance"—three infielders immortalized not for their fielding but for the metrical utility of their surnames.

And new poets keep writing new poems. In *Baseball Diamonds*, a huge anthology edited by Kevin Kerrane and Richard Grossinger, there are 64 poems, most of them contemporary. Richard Hugo, who played softball for Boeing before he turned pro as a poet, has three of the best, and there's a bunch by Joel Oppenheimer, who once wrote a book about the Mets. Charles Barasch, who once attended an umpire's school in Florida, contributed a celebration of the 1975 "World Series":

*Why, when Carlton Fisk hit the
home run,
did the man in section 22,
down the third base line,
raise his hands for joy,
forgetting his fat wife
at home with the teenage
daughter,
and driving home
why did he remember his
wedding night,
and even the first night
parked by the river,
which is why he married her
in the first place?*

The most prolific baseball bard is Tom Clark, who has written prose books about Charles O. Finley, Mark Fidrych and Shufflin' Phil Douglas. He writes a little elegy for "Clemente (1934-72)":

*won't forget
his nervous
habit of
rearing his
head back
on his neck
like a
proud horse*

And *Baseball Diamonds* also includes the three poems of Robert Francis, which most of these books reprint. Here is "The Base Stealer":

*Poised between going on and
back, pulled
Both ways taut like a tightrope-
walker,
Fingertips pointing the opposites,
Now bouncing tiptoe like a
dropped ball
Or a kid skipping rope, come on,
come on,
Running a scattering of steps
sidewise,
How he teeters, skitters, tingles,
teases,
Taunts them, hovers like an
ecstatic bird,
He's only flirting, crowd him,
crowd him,
Delicate, delicate, delicate,
delicate—now!*

The poems, I suppose, share no theme except for love of the game. But why do poets love the game so much? Poet and critic John Crowe Ransom suggests that baseball has the quality of pastoral, that genre of verse in which shepherds sing to nymphs or lament the passing of other singing shepherds—making a world that is small, exact, formal, whole, pleasing and separate from ordinary reality: a green island in a sea of change. In the best poems, the poets pay attention to small things: the way Clemente held his head, or how the base-stealer picks

his moment. Acts of attention through the microscope of pastoral.

Or maybe it is that all of us, especially poets, must satisfy the need to revisit childhood from time to time.

In naming the best poems, we must not overlook "Casey at the Bat," which is at least the sentimental favorite. As for the favorite sentimentality, a leading candidate is Grantland Rice's elegy for Babe Ruth, which once saturated the country with tears as durable as newsprint. "Game called by darkness . . ." the writer begins. He ends his penultimate stanza, "The Big Guy's left us, lonely in the dark, / Forever waiting for the flaming spark." Of course, he saves his best for the last line—in the process making one of the most forced rhymes of literary history: "The Big Guy's gone—by land or sky or foam / May the Great Umpire call him 'safe at home.'"

For some of us, as we slide toward the ultimate home plate, there is yet another sentimental favorite. In 1907 C. F. McDonald published "The Volunteer"—indebted, it is true, to "Casey at the Bat"—to provide a model for vigorous middle age. The poem describes a match between Bugville, which can field only nine players, and a visiting team that is superior and supercilious. Bugville finds itself far behind in the top of the ninth when its catcher breaks his thumb, leaving only eight men unless a volunteer from the stands replaces the injured player.

"And then a tall and stocky man cried out, 'I'll take a chance.'" Well, with the new catcher, whose "hair was sprinkled here and there with little streaks of gray," Bugville retires the bullies, comes to bat, and, after two outs, stages a rally, topped by a winning home run from the volunteer himself. Here is the last stanza:

*"What is your name?" the
captain asked. "Tell us your
name," cried all,
As down his cheeks enormous
tears were seen to run and fall.
For one brief moment he was
still, then murmured soft and
low:
"I'm mighty Casey who struck
out just twenty years ago." ■*

DONALD HALL recites poetry at colleges throughout the United States. He has written 412 poems, none on baseball.

"World Series" by Charles Barasch. By Permission. "Clemente (1934-72)" by Tom Clark. From *Blue* (Black Sparrow Press 1974). By permission. "The Base Stealer" Copyright © 1948 by Robert Francis. From *The Orb Weaver*. By permission of Wesleyan University Press.



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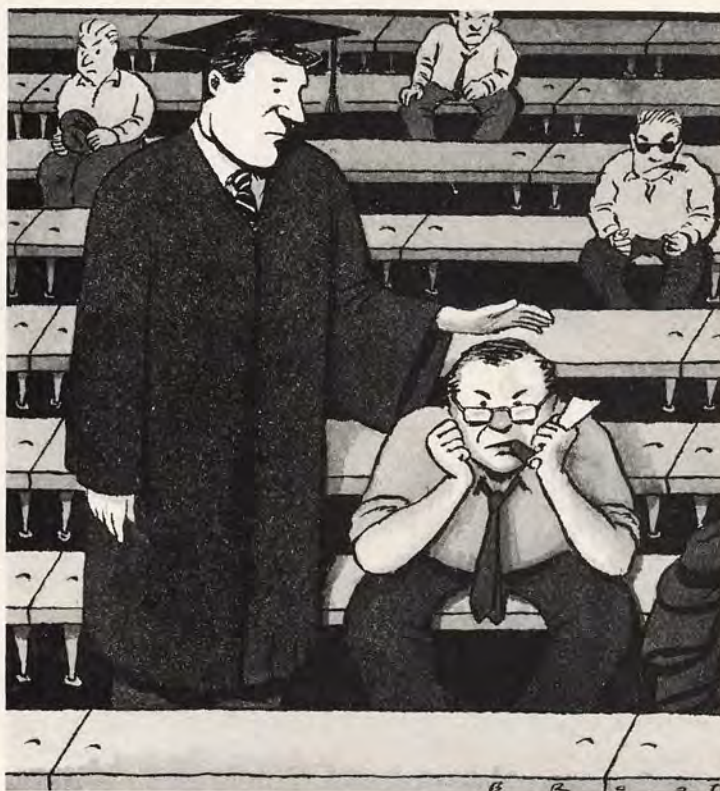
Dean Smith: A Bettor's Worst Enemy

BY PETE AXTHELM

He has smiled at me from the bottom of too many cocktail glasses reveling in my suffering. Sometimes I snap upright in the middle of the night, certain that I am about to be trapped forever in the middle of a North Carolina timeout huddle—or condemned to an eternity of running the four-corner offense. Perhaps the symptoms are familiar. The disease is not uncommon among basketball bettors. It's the Dean Smith syndrome, the curse of all who know in their hearts that North Carolina will win the game—and somehow fall half a point short of covering the spread.

Smith is, of course, an unwitting villain in the scenario. He is a good man and coach, and I salute him for finally "getting the monkey off his back" by winning a national championship. But now it's time for us afflicted Carolina bettors to shake off our own addiction.

Sometimes we gamblers take things for granted. We sit on our wallets in some deliriously noisy arena, titillated by endless fluke rebounds and foul shots clanking off rims, and we almost expect the game to fall within a tortured half-point of the spread. The Final Four was a classic example. Everyone who bet on the games is still bragging or lamenting about how and why each underdog covered the spread by half a point. But how many of us have paused amid our joy, pain and



conversation to ask what we can do to express our gratitude for the action?

Here is my philanthropic answer. The gamblers of America should endow an academic Chair for the Study of Gambling and the Humanities. It will be an interdisciplinary professorship, featuring such areas as Pain Control Clinics for those of us who have attempted to smash our heads into oblivion against arena railings; Philosophy Courses to help us accept some announcer's description of a crucial point-spread-covering hoop as "meaningless"; even Psychological Therapy for those who have to take the cure.

The chair will be called the Norton

W. Peppis Chair, in honor of the late great gambler whose most famous self-description seemed appropriate for anyone who wagered on the Final Four. "When I'm in action, I'm like a teapot," said Peppis. "I hiss and whistle and then I boil over." It will be located on the Chapel Hill campus. And its first recipient will be the man who has done more than anyone to cure us all of betting on college basketball—Dean Smith.

Every decade or so, when scandal strikes in the lanky form of a Jack Molinas or Rick Kuhn, purists raise the legitimate question of whether we should be betting on the performances of alleged amateurs and students. Personally, I think that some coaches and recruiters do more to corrupt college

athletes than gamblers ever dared to imagine accomplishing; if an occasional kid cheats, it is related more to the something-for-nothing ambience of college athletics than to the availability of a point spread in his local paper. Reform should start at the recruiting level, not the betting office. But whatever one thinks of that wider issue, no one has discouraged betting more than the upright mentor who doesn't cheat in recruiting, exploit his athletes or even think about point spreads. Unintentionally but unbearably, Smith has made us all stare into the face of our folly.

Long before he figured out how to win the championship, North Carolina figured in the worst game I have ever lost. In 1977,

the year he went to the four-corner offense just in time to give Marquette and Al McGuire the title, Smith lined up his disciplined squad against Nevada-Las Vegas in a semifinal. I laid the 1½ points with the utmost confidence.

Carolina took charge in the second half. When Smith ordered the familiar slowdown and a few points trickled away, there was little cause for concern. Even when the lead dwindled to two and Las Vegas was fouling in desperation, I was sanguine. The last man it fouled was John Kuester, a kind of designated free-throw artist who had made 21 of 23 foul shots in the tournament. If you haven't remembered or

guessed the punch line, you're probably not a bettor.

With seven seconds remaining and Carolina up by three, Kuester missed the second of two shots. Las Vegas grabbed the rebound and UNC cleared out of the way, sensibly avoiding a foul at all costs. The Las Vegas layup cleared the rim just as time ran out. Carolina, which had never even flirted with the possibility of defeat down the stretch, still won by a point and failed to cover. The result gave enduring meaning to that phrase "at all costs."

Many critics think that Smith's stalling in the ACC title game against Virginia presented a reason to institute a shot clock in college basketball. Then there were the Carolina bettors, who were more worried about hocking their watches.

Forget about the seven-minute stall by the three-point favorite Tar Heels. What really hurt was the ending. Ahead by two with one second left, Matt Doherty was fouled. His two foul shots gave his team a four-point lead. Then the television audience noticed a strange situation. The Tar Heels merely stood around and let Ralph Sampson take a length-of-the-court pass and slam it home for what Dick Enberg, who should know better, called a "meaningless" bucket. For those who had laid the three points, it was as

meaningless as Pearl Harbor. And just about as shocking.

At this point, the fair-minded may note that the result was not cataclysmic for everyone: Virginia bettors got to enjoy a thoroughly undeserved fluke victory. But hoops junkies know that it doesn't work out that way. When you lose that type of game, you remember it for a lifetime, retelling and embellishing the outrageous circumstances. When you win one, you tend to collect quietly. Sometimes there is a tinge of shame in getting what you don't deserve. There is also the fear that you are about to slide into a losing streak—because you've just used up all your luck.

Which brings us to the Final Four. If you were a Carolina fan, you are delighted for Smith and proud to be a Tar Heel. If you were a Carolina bettor, you're broke again.

In a semifinal, the Tar Heels were favored by 5½ points. With five seconds left they led 68–61 when Houston's Lynden Rose was fouled. I analyzed the variables. If Rose made both, Houston would foul and Carolina would have a chance to cover with a free throw. If he made one of two, UNC would win by six. If he missed both, Carolina probably would get the rebound. The only bad possibility: He would miss the second shot, Houston

would get the rebound and score when it was too late for Carolina to get fouled. That's what happened. UNC 68, Houston 63.

The Carolina-Georgetown final was a streak bettor's delight. While the Tar Heels were failing to cover in their most visible games, Georgetown had run up nine victories in a row against the number before falling half a point short in a semifinal win over Louisville. So when UNC was installed as a 1½-point favorite, veteran gamblers might have known what to expect. Even the shrewdest, however, could hardly have predicted the way in which UNC would fail to cover.

Only a churl would fault James Worthy, the hero of the evening, whose shots and final steal won the game. But the fact was that Worthy had two foul shots coming with two seconds left. It was understandable that, with his strength and concentration sapped by his heroics, he clanked both off the rim. They were meaningless, remember? At least until settlement day with your bookie.

Some day, speaking from his Norton W. Peppis Chair, Dean Smith can make this all clear. To his everlasting credit, Smith's players are concerned with winning, with developing as people, with graduating. The point spread is, as it should be, the farthest thing from their minds.

Peppis would also have understood. "Betting is a lonely game," he used to say. "Players, coaches, horses, bookmakers are all part of the enemy. Never expect a break from any of them."

This brings us back full circle to the purists' case against betting on college sports. They happen to be right, for the wrong reasons. College betting doesn't corrupt the athletes. It just tortures the gamblers. Who, of course, deserve it.

Even in the times of tight federal funding, endowing the Chair should not be a problem. Each time we contemplate betting on college basketball, we should all send a donation instead. If we think of betting on Carolina, we'll double the ante. Peppis would have loved the logic. When we tithe instead of losing, we'll save untold amounts of 11–10 vigorish. When we can't pay some week, we won't even have to come up with a good story for a bookie. Coach Smith might just be pointing us in directions that Norton W. Peppis never explored. There may be some good things about life below the boiling point. ■

The Day of Idiocy

Connoisseurs of chaos point to February 21 as this winter's darkest afternoon—the kind of Sunday that the Goddess of Wagering conjures up every decade or so. When it ended, at least one hoops player, Andre the Gambler, declared it the Day of Infamy—or Idiocy. A sampling of the wreckage of logic:

■ Alabama-Birmingham was favored by four over North Carolina-Charlotte. With two seconds remaining, UAB led by one. Charlotte backers seemed safe. Then Charlotte called timeout. Unfortunately, it had used up all its timeouts. Technical. Oliver Robinson made the two foul shots for UAB. Then he took the inbounds pass and was fouled. He made those, too. That's right, four free throws in two seconds. And a five-point victory for the favorites.

■ Houston was the hottest team in the NBA at the time. New York was among the worst. The Knicks routed the Rockets, 122–106.

■ Philadelphia was a 7½-point pick over crippled Phoenix. The 76ers drew out by 15 with 7:41 left. Then they relaxed. Dennis Johnson scored an uncontested stuff with nine seconds left to shave the margin to seven.

■ Andre the Gambler had L.A. minus 1½ over Denver. He also bet under the high total of 262. When he called Sports Phone for the result, he heard, "Lakers 132..." With his computer-like mind whirling, he realized that only one number could beat him—out of both bets. "If Denver scored anything from zero to 130, I win the game bet and the total. How much better odds can a man ask for?" Denver scored 131. —P. A.

PETE AXTHELM is a Newsweek columnist.

BASEBALL'S WORKING-CLASS HERO

Phil Niekro just does his job. Quietly. These days, that's saying a lot.



ON A HOT SUMMER NIGHT IN 1959 I was shagging flies in the outfield in a dimly lit ballpark in McCook, Nebraska. I was a 20-year-old rookie with the Kearney Yankees and we were getting ready to play the Braves of the Class D Nebraska State League.

There was a skinny kid throwing knuckleballs in the bullpen. Since the knuckleball was an unusual pitch I sometimes threw, I trotted over to investigate. The kid said he was 20, but he had an innocent look that made him seem younger. He said he was going to try to make it to the big leagues with just a knuckleball. I felt sorry for him because he had only one pitch. We compared knuckleball grips, I showed him how I threw my curve, and we wished each other luck. The kid said his name was Phil Niekro.

Four years later, when I was fastballing my way to 21 wins for the New York Yankees, I found myself thinking about that guy Niekro, who

BY JIM BOUTON

was still pitching in the minors.

Then a strange thing happened. Suddenly, Niekro was starting for the Atlanta Braves, and I was hanging on with the Seattle Pilots. A few years later, when Niekro was beating the Dodgers for his 100th career win, I was getting my ass kicked by the Clifton Phillies of the North Jersey Metropolitan League.

The Tortoise and the Hare is not one of my favorite stories.

Nineteen years after we first met in McCook, Nebraska, I ran into Phil again. It was during my comeback in 1978. We were both 39-year-old knuckleballers on the Braves, but the similarities ended there. Phil had won more than 200 games and was loved by the baseball establishment. I had written *Ball Four* and was the game's resident pariah. I wondered how he would treat me. As soon as I walked into the clubhouse, Phil walked over to greet me. He spent time helping me with my knuckleball.

Phil's a prince, the kind of guy every father wants his son to be.

—TED TURNER

THE TRIP TO LANSING, OHIO, takes us through tunnels carved through the Appalachians, past hillside farms, streams and rolling pastures. Every time the Braves are in Pittsburgh, Phil Niekro makes the one-hour-and-15-minute trip to his hometown. Phil is in the back seat of our rented car, a can of beer in his right hand, giving directions to the guy driving. I'm in charge of corralling empty beer cans on the floor of the front seat, the remains of a six-pack that Phil carried out of the clubhouse at Three Rivers Stadium. Phil is one of those guys who makes sure everyone has a beer.

"If you want to do some serious drinking—a shot and a beer, a shot and a beer—wait till we get to The Sportsman's Club. It's a hell of a feeling to walk in there. All the old miners. They lose fish this big at the bar." He holds his hands four feet apart. "It's beautiful."

Highway 40, one of the first roads to connect the east and west coasts, runs through the town of Bridgeport, past Niekro Little League Field and into Lansing (population 1,000).

"You'll like my mother. First chance she gets, she'll let everyone know she is Phil and Joe Niekro's mother. My father sits back and doesn't say anything. He just smokes his King Edward cigars and watches

TV from his La-Z-Boy chair."

We pass a church, a post office and the gas station where Phil worked after leaving high school. At the end of a row of two-story houses, across from the Joseph Krob Dairy Bar, we make a left into the Niekro driveway. Sixty feet to our right is The Sportsman's Club, a nondescript, cinderblock building. Behind the club, in an unpaved parking lot, 30 guys are standing around getting a head start on a keg of beer. An accordion is playing and they are having a good time watching a few dozen skewered chickens roasting over a large scrapwood fire.

We are spotted simultaneously by Phil's mother, who comes to kiss us as if we were old friends, and the men at The Sportsman's Club, who holler for us to join them. Phil's mother is worried that she'll lose us to the club before she can feed us dinner.

Inside the house, Phil Sr. is seated with his left leg elevated to ease the pain of phlebitis. He suffers from ailments common among men who spend their lives recovering coal in the low-ceilinged caves 12 miles under the ground. There is pain in his eyes, but he greets us warmly. As with his son's, his smile is a half-grin that appears occasionally and doesn't last long.

On the living room wall is a plaque with two mounted baseballs, each dated September 30, 1979, commemorating one of the game's most remarkable coincidences. On that day, Phil and Joe Niekro each won his 21st game of the season. The inscription reads, "You have filled our lives with love and happiness. Thank you for being our Mom and Dad."

The kitchen is cozy, the kind that invites small talk and poker games till two in the morning. Mom Niekro puts out a spread of kielbasa, potato salad and other Polish specialties that could feed the entire National League.

"We eat a lot," says Mom Niekro, "even after funerals. We eat, drink and have a party. That's the kind of people we are."

Mom Niekro does most of the talking. "When Phil and Joe are pitching against each other, their dad can't take the excitement with his high blood pressure. So I listen to the games and filter the results to him."

During our meal, relatives and neighbors wander into the kitchen unannounced to say hello and grab some homemade cookies.

Up through high school Phil had to share a bed with his brother and there was no indoor plumbing. The living

was not easy, but Phil remembers it fondly. "When the snow got deep, depending on what you had to do, you went off the back porch."

I ask if Phil ever got into trouble as a boy. "When he was nine years old," Phil Sr. says, "I told him never to go into that slag pit to swim. But he did and I gave him a good whipping."

As I pull out a pen and a pad to write this, Mom Niekro cuts in.

"It wasn't a real whipping," she says. "It was just a good talking-to. Not even loud."

It's not long before we are walking over to The Sportsman's Club. The 40-foot bar, a pool table and a couple of pinball machines entertain the members. A giant moosehead hangs on the wall. Only men are allowed. At The Sportsman's Club, ERA is only a pitching statistic. Everyone comes over to slap Phil on the back, but they are careful not to crowd him. They seem to view him as just one of the boys who got lucky and became a star. They call him "Sonny."

Introduced as the "former Yankee pitcher," I shake hands with a lot of bent fingers—one guy has a finger that looks like a hockey stick. These are strip miners, mill workers, construction men with lived-in bodies and weathered faces.

A guy named Eddie Garczyk plays a tune on his "squeeze box" that he wrote himself. "Stop those Polish jokes and love those Polish folks. Polish blood is flowing through my veins."

"You're in God's country now," steelworker Buck Krahel tells me. "This is where people are people. And there's three kinds of people. There's Dagos. There's Polacks. And people who wish they were."

Four men endorse this logic by downing their shots in a gulp. It hurts my esophagus to watch them. I order Perrier and everybody laughs, just like they laughed at the tinhorn in the western movies who ordered sarsaparilla.

"These are the people that keep me going. They don't know it, but they helped me get to the big leagues. Anyone who came over to the house knew they were going to get in a game of catch. I go out to pitch for these people. I want them to be proud of me."

"The year both Joe and I won 21 games, I said to myself, 'Those people in Lansing must be feeling pretty good right now.' After I pitch, I'll sit at my locker and think about what my mother and father are thinking about. I know that either I've just made them



have a nice evening or they're going to have a hard time going to bed that night.

"Life is so easy in Lansing that I can't understand any other way of living," Phil says. "When I left Lansing, everything started crowding me—cities, buildings. I still hang on to Lansing to keep from getting into something I can't quite understand."

It would seem that Phil Niekro's love for Lansing is unqualified. But, then, how do you explain the dreams?

"A dream that I used to have all the time, I used to get caught in a bowl of potato salad. Big giant bowl of potato salad. I'd just about crawl up to the edge of the bowl and the mayonnaise'd get me and I'd slide back down. I couldn't stand it. Of course when I'd slide to the bottom I'd wake up. I never did find out why I was having

that dream—I hated potato salad. My mother could never get me to eat it. Had that dream all through school. After I left home I quit having them dreams. I have no idea what it means."

The man don't say much, but he pitches a lot.

—EX-CATCHER ELROD HENDRICKS

PHIL NIEKRO HAS PLAYED FOR only one team almost a quarter of a century. He has toiled at the bottom of the standings in an era in which frustrated players hold out for higher salaries and others demand to be traded on whim. He has remained quiet amid the chaos, content to do his job. Characteristically, he has only nice things to say about the Atlanta Braves.

"The Braves have been good to me. A check and a World Series ring wouldn't mean a damn thing unless I did it with a Braves' uniform on."

The closest Phil has come to his dream was in 1969 when he led the Braves to the division title with 23 victories. But World Series hopes ended quickly in the playoffs and the Braves resumed their losing ways. Niekro played for half the salary he deserved on these teams without complaint until Ted Turner bought the team. In 1979, Turner rewarded Niekro with a three-year contract worth more than a million annually.

Phil Niekro has appreciated every minute he's spent in the major leagues. "Most people would take a 0 for 3 against the Cincinnati Reds just to put on a uniform, to ride in a jet plane and stay at a nice hotel."

It seems odd that Phil is the player representative. He says that he doesn't like the job. He agreed to do it only as a favor for Ted. It's interesting that he sees it as doing something for management.

"Did you agree with the owners?"

"I get lots of letters from fans that say ballplayers are making too much money and I agree with that. A lot of ballplayers today are spoiled. They think the game owes them something. They don't realize the game would go on without any of us."

What would Phil do if he weren't playing ball?

"I haven't thought about it," he says. "I tried to sell used cars once. I had to beef up the price two or three hundred dollars. That's a lot of money to most people. I knew what those cars were worth. I couldn't do it."

There was a time when Phil couldn't make his junior high team because there wasn't a catcher who could handle the knuckleball. Phil was signed for a meager \$500 bonus, was nearly released his first year in Wellsville, New York, and cried and begged for another chance. He spent six years in the minors. Until this season, he had never spent a day on the disabled list. Consider the hardships that accompany the knuckleball. Catchers can't catch it, coaches can't teach it and managers don't like anything they can't understand.

The knuckleball, an airborne sphere that has no spin, is easily buffeted by the slightest breeze. In fact, it rico-



Phil with his mom and dad; below, with his wife Nancy and Michael, John and Philip



chets through the air, darting and wobbling, as Willie Stargell put it, like a "butterfly with hiccups." To pitch a baseball off your fingertips so that it travels without rotation and darts within the strike zone 60 feet away requires the touch of a safecracker and the mind of a Zen philosopher.

"I don't think about laying it in my hand a certain way, or how much pressure. It's like putting on a shirt. I just pick up the ball and it happens."

It is the most difficult pitch to learn. Whitey Ford, a master at picking up pitches, learned Johnny Sain's slider in three days and Luis Arroyo's screwball in a week. After much practice, Ford gave up on the knuckleball. Like a musical instrument, it is best learned by a child's fingers. I learned to throw it when I was 11 by following Dutch Leonard's instructions on the back of a cereal box. I knew I had stumbled onto something big when I hit my brother in the kneecap and he lay on the ground moaning, "What a great pitch. What a great pitch."

To gain control over something by letting go of it was something I finally learned during my comeback, at the age of 39. Phil Niekro had it from the beginning. "I learned it from an old miner," says Phil Sr. "I threw it to Sonny one day in the backyard and right away he wanted to learn it. He was eight years old."

Father and son spent the formative years trying to maim each other. "I'd see how many times I could hit him with it, rather than let him catch it," says Phil. "More than once, I hit him in the groin and thought I killed him."

Over the years he has nearly killed dozens of catchers. "You don't catch the knuckleball, you defend against it," says Braves' manager Joe Torre, who caught Niekro in the '60s. "The first knuckler Phil threw hit me on the elbow. The second one I got in front of, but forgot to catch, and it hit me in the chest."

Bob Uecker, former catcher turned comic, became so black and blue he once told writers that Niekro could

Sportsman's Club in Lansing, 'where people are people'

pitch every day but that *he* needed four days' rest between games. Uecker finally learned how to handle Niekro's knuckler. "You just wait until it stops rolling, then pick it up."

Niekro is the greatest knuckleball pitcher of all time. He is headed for the Hall of Fame. He has amassed 240 victories and more than 2,000 strikeouts. Hoyt Wilhelm threw knuckleballs until he was 49 and quit only because he couldn't field anymore. Niekro wins Gold Gloves. He could be baseball's pitching grandfather. Bill James, premier baseball statistician, says that if Phil had pitched for the Yankees, Reds or Orioles he probably would have 300 wins today.

What is Niekro's secret?

"His ability to throw a knuckleball," says his former Class A manager Red Murff, "is secondary to his ability to cope with the game."

"I just kept my mouth shut and my eyes and ears open," says Phil. This has helped make him enormously popular around the locker room, where the finest compliment is, "He's a helluva guy, wouldn't say spit if he had a mouthful."

The linescore after one particular loss read: Braves 0-5-6, Pirates 2-3-0. An interviewer told Niekro he must feel awful the way the infield played and Niekro answered: "It wasn't so bad. They were good until the last hop."

His popularity is not confined to the clubhouse.

"My mother loves him," says Braves' catcher Bruce Benedict. "She talks about him all the time. She thinks he just drips with class. She's in love with 'The Knucks.' He stands for all the good things."

"When we were in Japan together," says Pittsburgh's Dave Parker, "he made such an impression on the people they wanted him back again. He enchanted them. They were overwhelmed by his personality."

I've got hundreds of friends, every guy I ever played with, every manager I ever played for, every coach. It's just not that hard to get along with people.

—PHIL NIEKRO

NANCY NIEKRO IS DIPPING small triangles of dough stuffed with crabmeat into a deep-fat fryer on the back porch of the Niekro home outside Atlanta.

It is a brick colonial with a circular drive on an acre of land about 20 minutes from Fulton County Stadium. A Lincoln Continental, a Mercedes and a Cherokee Jeep are in the garage. It's a long way from Lansing, Ohio. The house is immaculately kept by Nancy, who won't trust a maid to do a thorough enough job.

No matter how well off people are, they tend to worry about things from time to time—about finances, the future, something. Not Phil.

"What's there to worry about," says Phil, sipping a beer. "If you've got your health, you've got your wealth."

"You see the way he is?" says Nancy. "I have to stay up worrying at night because he doesn't. One of my lifelong goals is to jump in bed and fall asleep before he starts snoring."

What is Phil's routine like the day of a game? How late does he sleep in the morning?

"Whenever I get up."

"See what I mean?" says Nancy.

"What is it like living with a 20-

game winner?" I ask his wife.

"He leaves his clothes lying around just like the other kids." Nancy waves her hand. Whenever Nancy says something like this about Phil, someone usually reminds her what a terrific guy Phil is. This time it is her mother, Marge, who's visiting for a few weeks. Marge tells Nancy what a "sweetie pie" Phil is.

"To my mother, Phil's the King," says Nancy. "He can do no wrong. Sometimes I think she prefers him to me."

Phil has been going in and out of the room, getting beers, checking the roast in the oven, answering the phone. He leaves to play some country and western music on the stereo, saying, "You don't like your paycheck if you don't like country and western." He returns with a baseball autographed by Jimmy, Rosalynn, Chip, Amy and Billy Carter. Phil campaigned for Carter when he ran for governor and president.

"Are you a Democrat?" I ask.

"Not really," Nancy says. "He'd support anybody who asked him."

Charities have asked for time and he has obliged. Phil is the national chairman for the Spinal Bifida Association and he has received the Brian Piccolo Award. People still talk about the time he was in a March of Dimes Walk-a-thon while Nancy was in labor with their third child. When the procession reached downtown, Phil detoured to the hospital, checked out his new son and returned to the march.

"Phil's got a fascination for people," Nancy says. "The way he is, he'll talk to anyone. One day we were shopping for furniture and an old wino came up to us in the store. He was losing teeth and he smelled terrible. I was so repulsed, I had to leave. But Phil stayed and talked to the guy."

This agreeableness has caused Nancy some distress over the years. They met on a Milwaukee Braves charter when she was a stewardess. The flight was overstaffed and Nancy was told to relax. She sat next to Phil and they played cards.

"He was the most extraordinary man I'd ever met," says Nancy. "The way he talked, the way he thought. You know how you meet somebody and you know that's it? That's what it was like."

They were so infatuated with each other they forgot to exchange phone numbers when they got off the plane. He didn't even know her last name. So she wrote him a letter—which was a very uncharacteristic thing for Nancy.

"She was a real square," says Marge.

After a year of phone calls and letters Nancy visited Phil in Richmond, Virginia, where Phil was playing. Phil told Nancy that if she came to visit, she'd "never go back home," which Nancy took as a marriage proposal.

That was the last she heard of it. Nancy spent an entire week in Richmond during which time there was no hint of the proposal. She started getting nervous.

At this point in the story the details get fuzzy, except that it was at a square dance. She brought up the subject and he agreed.

"The trouble is," says Nancy with mild exasperation, "I'll never know if he was planning to ask me or not. The way he is, he'd say yes to anybody. For all I know, if I hadn't asked him to marry me, someone else would and he'd have said yes to her."

"I was just about to ask her," says Phil, grinning.

"But I'll never know, will I?" asks Nancy. "I'll just never know."

The roast beef is ready. At the table we bow our heads and Phil says grace.

"If I bring home gossip from the ballpark, he doesn't want to hear about it," says Nancy. "I used to get upset when less deserving players made more money than Phil. He never wants to talk about it."

"I don't care what the other players make," Phil says.

I ask Phil if there is anybody he doesn't like.

"I may not like everybody, but I respect everybody."

"The only people he gets mad at," says Nancy, "are me and the kids. And then the problem is he never argues. It's very frustrating. I had to actually teach him to fight with me."

We arrange for a photographer to shoot the Niekro kids before they leave for school the following morning. Phil volunteers to drive the kids to school if the session runs a little long. "Now, if you write that he gets up in the morning and takes the kids to school," Nancy says to me, "I'm going to throw up on your story."

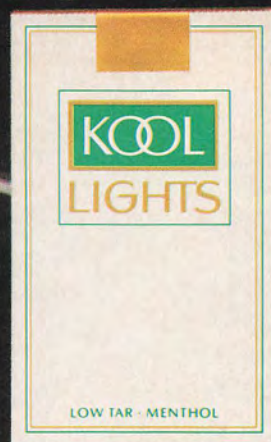
A few more beers and it's time to call it a night. Phil thanks me for being part of his life for two days.

"That's what it's all about," he says warmly. "Tomorrow we can wake up and remember the good time." ■

JIM BOUTON's Ball Four Plus Ball Five (the original Ball Four with a 10-year update) is available this spring in paperback.

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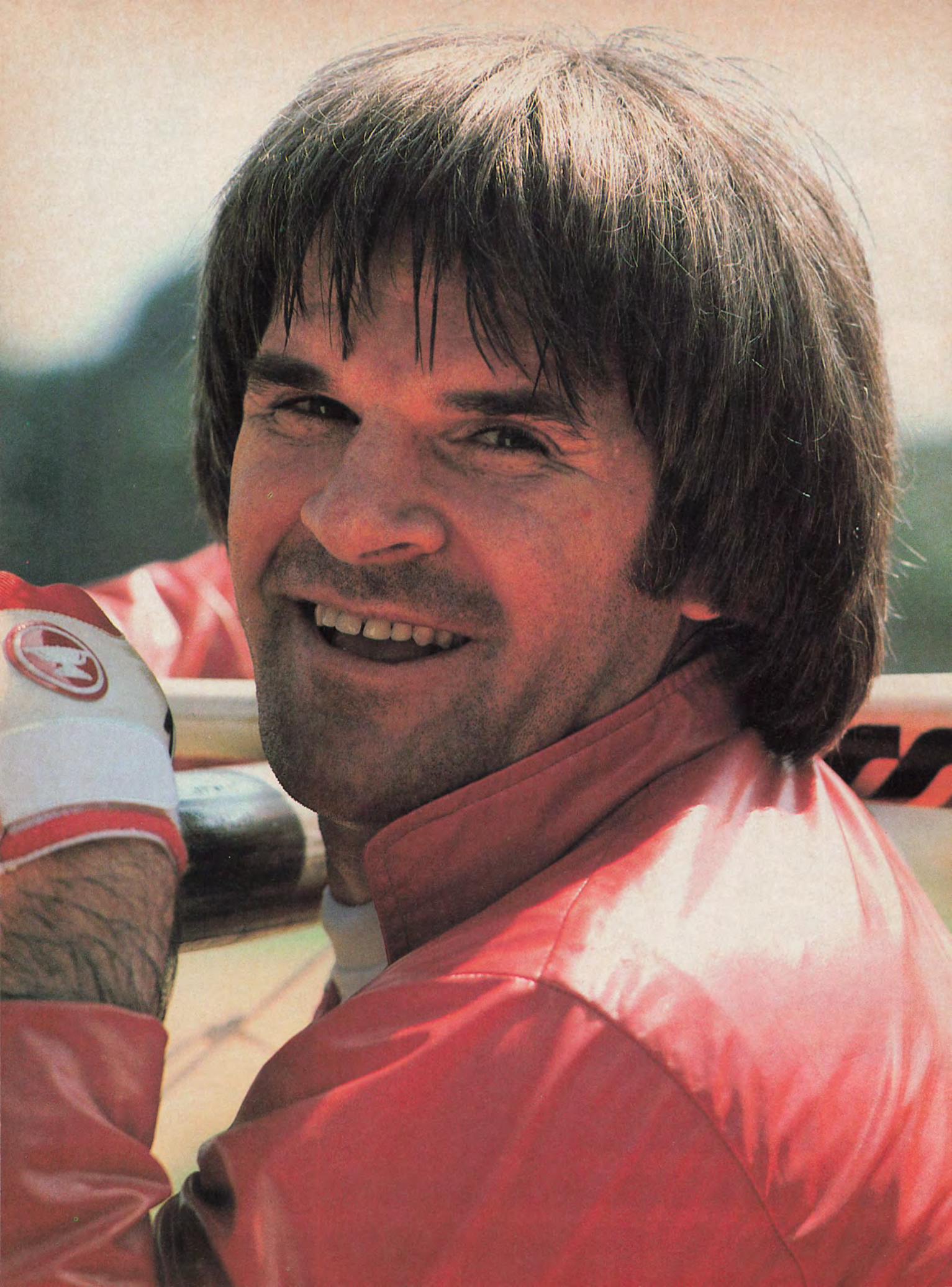
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THE DEVIL AND CHARLIE HUSTLE

Pete Rose stands among baseball's greatest, but there's an asterisk after his record off the field

BY ROGER DIRECTOR

IN LATE WINTER, AFTER THE snow has melted from the Ohio Valley, the sear, brown hillocks of northern Kentucky briar mass in bleak musculature as far as the eye can see.

Speeding, as always, across this sepia landscape south of his hometown, Cincinnati, Peter Edward Rose prodded his new, gray Porsche onto an interstate heading south toward a 6 p.m. guest shot on a sports talk radio show. This new car had given him problems last night. He had, like some teen tomcat, sat inside it with a girlfriend, Susan Brown, playing the radio and romancing her until the wee hours with stories from his minor league career. Then, when he had tried to start it to drive home, the battery was dead.

Once upon a time his car had been a Corvette with a racing stripe. And once upon a time Rose's hair was dark, close-cropped and crew-cut—spiked almost like a soap holder—instead of the way it is now, helmeting his head in long grayish drizzles and boyish bangs. But, then and now, the talk and the romance were of baseball.

It is the last year on Rose's four-year contract with the Philadelphia Phillies, his 20th big league season. And having eclipsed Stan Musial's National League hit record of 3,630 late last season, Rose performed in such characteristically coltish fashion that, despite his looming 41st birthday, the inescapable conclusion drawn by the Phillies and, increasingly, the

rest of America was that sometime in 1984—barring unforeseen changes in the laws of the universe—Pete Rose would storm past Ty Cobb to become the most prolific hitter in the game.

Rose calls Hank Aaron's home-run record the most unscalable wall in the game, but surely Cobb's is no less imposing. Two hundred hits for 20 years in a row would still fall 191 short. Already, more than two years before he begins his final assault, people are asking Rose about this wherever he goes. And, while Rose tries to slough it off, he says that whenever he thinks about it he gets goose bumps.

All of Pete Rose's life has led unswervingly to his place in sports history. No man ever bore more love for the game. As Rose admits: "Everybody I know and everybody I will meet; every place I been and every place I will go; everything that I buy or will buy is because of baseball."

Abner Doubleday never could have dreamed. So ardent is Rose's pursuit of perfection that it has an inhuman quality about it, as though—like Faust—he has somehow bartered his soul to the devil to achieve things that mere mortals cannot. He has arranged to remain an adolescent. He has allowed no interruptions, no distractions, no loitering to keep him from his endless love, baseball.

Rose's appetite for the game and glory is something we identify with heroes such as Cobb or Babe Ruth. Unlike Ruth, he has never been self-

abusive; unlike Cobb—and as hard as Rose plays—never overtly vicious. But while Rose's appetite has led him to mythic heights and a fortune, it also has been, at times, as unseemly as lust tends to get. He has been recklessly self-absorbed, ultimately at the expense of his marriage. And behind the legend, as the pay-out on his pact with devil baseball, lies a man who has brutalized the feelings of those who loved him and supported him as he went about his child's play.

Nothing, it seems, can deter him. And the Phillies, eager to lock up Rose through what could be one of the great three-ring, seat-packing circus seasons since Rose's own 44-game hitting streak in 1978, his last year with Cincinnati, had already begun negotiating with Rose's attorney, Reuven Katz, on a new contract.

"One that's fair to both sides," Rose said, humming along in his Porsche and adjusting a blinking cop-o-meter on the dashboard. Rose, as immodest a man as it is possible to find, had even accepted the notion that he won't be the highest-paid player. "I was king of the hill for one year," he said, "but I can't be the highest-paid player now. I could be if I was 30 years old. The only way I could be the highest-paid player in baseball is if somehow I could go to arbitration."

"Because you got guys making a million-eight or two million; now, if I go in front of an arbitrator, what could he possibly look at and not say, 'Well, I have to vote for the player.' And when he looks at my stats, he's not looking at something I did in 1968 or 1978. Last year I played every game, was second in the league in runs, led the league in hits and was second in the batting race and played good defense. He can't hold age against me."

Rose continued to pile on fact after stat after streak, hammer and tongs, all to the red-lit accompaniment of the fuzz alarm's bleating *beep-beep* on the

Photograph by Chuck Solomon

dashboard of his hurtling Porsche. It was warning him to slow down, but the *beep-beep* went mainly unheeded. Every fact was true. Every claim could be substantiated by a line in a record book: three batting titles, 1973 MVP, *The Sporting News* Player of the Decade (over Hank Aaron's objections. "I'm the Player of the Decade, not Aaron," thumped Rose. "Hell, he didn't even play the last three or four years of the decade. I hit .300 every year but one."). No, there could be no ceiling on Pete Rose's worth. No way God (.385, 47 HRs, 147 RBIs) takes a team owner, some shipping magnate or shopping-mall developer, to arbitration and loses. If only Claus von Bülow had Rose's statistics. Or at the very least been hitting behind him in the lineup.

Rose's career, built on measly singles, is an Eiffel Tower of toothpicks, a Great Wall of impenetrable breadth and transcendent length. He hits the way other men breathe. Though some have criticized his productivity as a leadoff hitter and the fact he neither walks nor steals bases as much as some in that position of the lineup, Rose has sprinted, on his stubby legs, more than 125 miles around National League basepaths.

He owns, almost incidentally, records for best fielding percentage by an outfielder to play in 1,000 games—and no one even thinks of Rose as an outfielder anymore—and for total bases by a switch-hitter. Apart from his base-hit milestones, and the 44-game hitting streak that ended on a 2-2 Gene Garber *changeup* Rose still grouches about, his most fiery hitting achievement ironically has been a 12th-inning Shea Stadium home run off the Mets' Harry Parker in the 1973 playoffs the day after Rose's second-base set-to with Met shortstop Bud Harrelson. Few home-run hitters, let alone singles hitters such as Rose, have ever hawked up such an exclamatory spit in the face of a bloodthirsty crowd. Today, Rose's friend and former Red teammate, Johnny Bench, recollects with awe that moment when, perhaps more than ever before or since, the steel door on Rose's emotions swung open and all the raw fire in his heart leaped into view: Rose tearing around the bases, his fist brandished in the air, the heat forcing back into their seats a lynch mob of 51,000, each one sodden with Rose's defiance. "He is," says Sparky Anderson, "a very mean man on the field."

As Rose says, there's not a bit of luck involved in any of his success. He

represents that ultimately unfathomable miracle of self-belief that brings out the genius in people. Once upon a time, this country prospered from the industriousness Rose exhibits. His barely bridled spirit, now a scarcity in the land, would work wonders on the seized production lines of an ailing U.S. automobile industry or a sluggish civil service, a crumbling educational system, a marbled-with-fat military procurement process. That is why Rose is so obvious a throwback in America. He is a one-man bucket brigade of seemingly inexhaustible spirit.

The most telling moment in his career wasn't a circus catch or a spectacular throw or an extra-inning home run. It was Rose, in the 1980 World Series, backing up catcher Bob Boone on a foul popup near the dugout and catching the ball for an out when it squirted from Boone's glove.

"He always faces up to the ultimate challenges," says Mike Schmidt. "When we won the pennant in 1980 I saw Pete go to home plate against Nolan Ryan when we couldn't have an out. I saw him go up there, look in the Houston dugout and smile and look out at Ryan and just stare at him as if to say, 'You think you can get me out here? There is *no* way!' And he intimidated Ryan into walking him."

Rose has, in two decades, not merely adorned the game and entertained fans, he has reshaped this oft-times sleepy sport in his image.

Says Rose: "I play the game of baseball the way the game should be played." This refrain-cum-epitaph has left a different footprint from that left by other great players of outsize spirit and merit. Willie Mays, for example, was a more creative player whose genius was *heroic*; it didn't conform to the boundaries of the game itself and lay beyond the grasp of other players. But Rose represents what every player *can* be. In so doing, he has elevated the most basic notions of winning and teamwork to levels that have edified even the best of those who have played with him.

"When he played on the opposing team—Cincinnati—he irked me," says Schmidt, the NL's most valuable player the last two seasons. On July 19, 1978, with his hitting streak all but stopped at 31 games, Rose came up with two outs in the ninth inning and the Reds leading 7-2 and bunted in front of Schmidt for a hit. "Don't *ever* dare me to bunt," says Rose.

Schmidt once thought he had forced a greedy person to demean himself. Now he thinks otherwise. "Now I

know that Pete Rose is a pro ballplayer's ballplayer," Schmidt says. "There is nobody playing baseball today in the big leagues, the minor leagues, Little League, anywhere that wouldn't like to play like Pete Rose."

"He has qualities that once were not strong qualities in me. I saw in him the constant drive, the never-relaxing attitude. He is always trying to intimidate, always talking positive, always at the ballpark early, always got a bat in his hands sanding it. Pete Rose is my idol as a ballplayer."

"He's the first guy in 1980 that said, 'Hey, Herbie, you know you're going to be MVP this year. You got a chance to be MVP.' I always knew that inside of me, but you never want to come out with that statement."

SPENDING A DAY TALKING TO Rose as he wheels across the landscape is, if you are a baseball fan, like sniffing a lilac in the dead land. Instead of talking about a shopping trip or a cleathead he'd met at a party the night before, Rose talks about Gaylord Perry's spitball, about how an ophthalmologist explained to him that Nolan Ryan's fastball moved at such velocity that the iris in the eye was incapable of focusing fast enough to follow it, hence its "explosion" as it reached the plate.

The syntax is sandlot, the language thoroughly dockside. Rose isn't apt in a million years to throw out as a conversation starter that West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's *Ostpolitik* is naively playing into the hands of Russia's attempt to splinter the NATO alliance. He makes no mention of movies he's seen or books he wants to read. What he really wants is "to hit a popup to the infield some day and have the guy drop it and me end up on third. And get a base on balls and get to second somehow."

When it comes to understanding history and the way things work, Rose is most curious to know why, all those years he was with the Reds, Sparky Anderson used to pitch to the Dodgers' Steve Garvey with men in scoring position instead of walking him to face Ron Cey. "Garvey wore our ass out," Rose says in exasperation. The deepest mystery of the universe is why, with a man on third and two outs, you never see a batter walked intentionally, but with a man on second you do. "It's still going to take a hit to get him in," Rose puzzles. "It doesn't make sense."

The happiest day of his life was probably the day the baseball strike ended last year, according to Pete's



33-year-old brother, Dave. The angriest—try the last day of the 1978 season, when Anderson took Rose out of the lineup in the seventh inning. Rose had 198 hits for the season and it turned out that the game went 14 innings and Rose's batting spot got up three more times.

Ask Pete Rose the state of the world and he will show you how well, a week into his pre-spring batting regimen at an indoor hitting cage called The Ball Game, a new callus is forming on the palm of his right hand. He treats his calluses like family members, each having a temperament and history all its own, but all functioning together to make the perfect hitter's hand. "I'm on a great team, I play for a great city, I got a great contract, I'm on top of my game and I got a chance to go to the playoffs," Rose says in sum, putting to rest the gloomy existential writhings of most of mankind. "So, what the hell!"

Rose calls himself "optimistic" or "aggressive" or "enthusiastic" and all of these qualities comprise the term that, in name and deed, Rose has come

to exemplify: hustle. The official definition of "hustle" is . . .

doing something that everyone is certain can't be done, getting the win because you got there first and stayed with it, blisters and elbow grease and sweat and missing lunch, doing more unto an opponent than the other guy is doing unto him, believing in yourself and the business you're in, the sheer joy of winning, being the sorest loser in town, hating to take a vacation because you might miss a piece of the action, heaven if you do it and hell if you don't

St. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians is scarcely more inspiring. Rose's Letter to the Cincinnatians is printed on a plaque behind the dark wood bar of the Gay 90's restaurant, a favorite hangout in Cheviot, outside of Cincinnati.

This had been for Rose a typical, happy day in his hometown. He took 200 swings at The Ball Game. Rose's

A career built on singles; a one-man bucket brigade

batting eye is so sharp he can strike a pitch end on, like a cueball, with the fat tip of the bat barrel. Of his swings, none resulted in balls being fouled back. There was simply the whoosh, every eight seconds, of a ball expelled from the machine and then the solid, metallic ring—like John Henry with his hammer—of Rose's aluminum bat spattering the ball in any direction he wants.

"You could count on your hand the times all season I pop up to the infield," Rose said proudly. "When I'm swinging real good, I wouldn't mind going up to the plate and telling the umpire: 'Hey—let's just make it 0-and-2.'"

He has devised various batting drills to help him retain quickness and coordination. Instead of taking pitches at 90 miles an hour, Rose has the velocity set at 70, but then moves up to within 40 or 50 feet of the pitching machine. In another drill, Rose will

look away from the machine and have someone yell when the ball is released. Quickly, Rose spins his head, sights the ball and swings—something akin to trapshooting.

At The Ball Game, Rose trained his eye on his 21-year-old protege, Tom Gioiosa, from Brockton, Massachusetts. This curious relationship began in March of 1978 when Gioiosa and his baseball teammates at Massasoit Junior College arrived at King Arthur's Hotel in Tampa, Florida, for spring training. According to Gioiosa, instead of partying in his off-hours he began playing catch with a young boy who turned out to be Pete Rose Jr. Petey introduced his new friend to Big Pete, who was so impressed with Gioiosa's hustle that he took him into his home in Cincinnati. Although Gioiosa first entered Rose's life as a friend of Pete Jr.'s, he has become Big Pete's buddy, too. They exchange high-fives and banter with the fond intimacy of road roomies. When Rose moved into a bachelor's house after his divorce, Gioiosa moved with him.

One senses that Rose is trying to make Gioiosa, as well as Petey, his baseball legatee. This is in much the same way that his own father, Harry—a semipro football player and lifelong athlete until his death at 58 in 1970, the day after playing basketball with Pete—bequeathed to his son his own hustling ethic of sports devotion.

Now Rose sees it in Gioiosa (as well as muscleman Ron McBeath, a former Mr. U.S.A. whom Rose is drilling in the basics of football. Rose called his friend Dick Vermeil to get McBeath a tryout with the Philadelphia Eagles.). Rose got him the Pete Rose baseball scholarship at the University of Cincinnati, where Gioiosa hit .358. This spring, Gioiosa signed a professional contract with the Baltimore Orioles. The first thing he did, naturally, was buy a Corvette. He and Pete date the Brown sisters, Pete Susie and Tom Cindy.

Given the dedication and hustle, anyone, it seems—from Mike Schmidt to Ron McBeath—can avail himself of Rose's services and enter the Pete Rose Circle of Hustle. Well, we all had it at one time or another, didn't we? Think back for a second, and pull up a chair here with Pete and the rest of his friends in the warm, friendly confines of the Gay 90's, the Hustle Hall of Fame. And have a bite to eat and a bit of banter with Mr. Baseball.

Rose was having a bowl of cream of celery soup. He wanted to watch his weight. *Why don't you have a bowl too?*

I know it looks awful. But it tastes great. Can't I order some for you? Good. Oh, waitress . . . 220,000,000 bowls of cream of celery soup please. And some saltines.

" . . . I'll tell you how long ago it was," said Rose, finishing his soup, tilting back at ease in his chair and recounting another anecdote. "Bench was catching, that's how long ago. And Seaver's pitching. I'm trying to do good, coming back to Cincinnati and everything. The first three times I'm up, everything the umpire's calling, Bench is bitching about it. Just the opposite when Bench is hitting.

"And Eric Gregg's the umpire . . . Eric don't take too much crap. Anyway, I'm up there the fourth time and I'm trying to hit, and he throws me a two-strike pitch down and in and Eric says, 'Ball,' and Bench starts bitching.

"He comes back with a curveball on the outside and Eric calls another ball. Now they're bitching back and forth, and I said, 'I'm trying to hit. Relax. There are 50,000 people here and I'm trying to concentrate.'

"Anyway, he comes back with a two-and-two pitch and Eric calls it ball three. Now they're ready to fight.

"Finally, Eric just gets tired of it and he rips his mask off, looks at Bench and says, 'Bench, you say one more goddamn word, I'm going to bite your goddamn head off!'

"Bench says, 'If you do, you'll have more goddamn brains in your stomach than you got in your head.'"

Rose and the whole table, and the waitresses who have stopped and assembled to hear the story, wailed with laughter. "Next pitch I took, strike three." Rose howled.

Quickly, easily, comfortably, you find yourself laughing along with everybody else.

"One time we were in this truckstop and we ordered food and we're sitting there and this truckdriver comes in and sits at the next table," Rose continued. "And as the waitress walks over, she says, 'Can I help you?' The truckdriver says, 'Yeah, I'd like to have two headlights, four hubcaps and a cup of coffee.'

"Well, she didn't know what the hell the guy wanted, so she goes back and we can hear arguing. The cook says, 'Honey, the man wants two eggs sunnyside up and a stack of flapjacks.'

"She says, 'Oh, all right,' goes and gets the truckdriver a cup of coffee . . . and a big bowl of beans. The truckdriver looks at these beans and looks at her and says, 'Hey, this is not what I ordered.'

"She says, 'I know, but I thought you might want to gas up while you're waiting.'"

Rose was rolling now, into a rat-at-tat repertoire of bilgy one-liners that held the restaurant in thrall.

"Why doesn't a chicken wear any underwear?" Rose asked. "Because his pecker's on his chin!"

HAHAHAHAHAARRR!!

On and on Rose ran. One gamey gag after another until the place was in a riot and he was wiping the tears from his eyes.

By a quarter of six that night, though, the one-liners had definitely subsided. Rose had turned off the interstate at Florence, Kentucky, and tooled up and down Turfway Road looking, as per instructions, for WIOK radio and the sports talk show.

"You see any goddamn antenna?" he asked. "I ain't never heard of no radio station without an antenna."

He stopped in at the parking lot of a tavern to ask a local. But the local had never heard of WIOK. Rose gunned his Porsche across the street to one of those "Grab It 'N' Gag" grocery stores. They'd never heard of a radio station around there either. It was now around 6 p.m. Air time. And Rose, habitually ultracooperative with the media, was disturbed.

Finally, Rose located the studio. "Look at that sign," Rose joked, pointing to a bunch of itchy-bitsy letters in one window of an apartment complex. "How was I going to see that?"

"GET IN HERE! GET IN HERE! WHERE WERE YOU?"

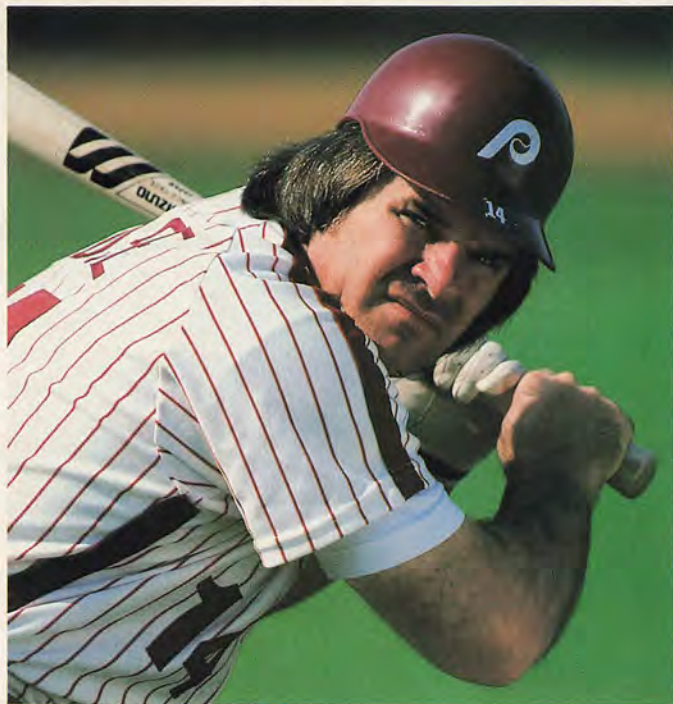
Rose was barely out of his car before a wildly gesticulating banshee appeared and began screaming from the stairs leading up to the quote radio station unquote. Meet the host of "Let's Talk Sports," Andy Furman.

"I was looking for an aerial," Rose said, hurrying. "Don't you have an aerial at this station?"

"WE HAVE A CLOTHES HANGER," Furman shrieked. "WHERE WERE YOU?"

"Hey, how many watts do you have?" Rose asked playfully. "Do you even have one watt?"

Later, accompanying Rose back to Cincinnati, his passenger marveled at Rose's ability to accommodate all reporters and all microphones, even an outlet as tiny as WIOK, but Rose said he loves to keep up his popularity. And he noted how "people know somebody like Joe DiMaggio today because of his Mr. Coffee commercials. He's always doing things, playing in celebrity golf tournaments. You think



he's lost any popularity because he's retired? He's probably gained some."

Rose, however, was not looking forward to his own retirement. "I have to think that the hardest thing in the world would be to be hitting .315 or .320 and having a real good year with a lot of hits, a lot of runs scored, and then suddenly decide you're retiring," Rose said. "Why would you ever want to retire if you still could do it?"

"You probably won't have to for a few more years," his passenger said.

"You got to have some luck there," Rose said. "Your eyes got to hold out. Now you got all these experts tell you that once you reach 40 your eyes can go as quick as a day. Your eyes can just go on ya!"

"Who says?" the passenger asked.

"Doctors and crap like that," Rose said. "But there's no part of my goddamn anatomy that's 40 years old. See, I don't have crow's feet. I don't have fat. My eyes are good. I got a lot of hair. The only reason people know I'm 40 is it's in the goddamn paper."

"Well, you do have all that gray hair—even though you dye it."

"Yeah, I know. But we got a guy on our team who's got streaks in his hair—George Vukovich—and he's 25 years old. If I went to another country and played and didn't say anything about my age, most guys seeing me would guess my age at 32, 33, 34. I can't foresee me getting old as far as playing baseball is concerned as long as the Phillies have a shot at winning everything and being contenders."

"Perhaps that is what keeps Yastrzemski going with Boston," his passenger suggested.

"When's the last time Yastrzemski had a good year?" Rose asked.

"A while," the passenger conceded. "He's got that bad back."

"Yeah," Rose said. "With that bad back he's just one swing away from not playing. Just one swing."

ON THE BRIGHT, GREEN, sunlit field of Jack Russell Stadium in Clearwater, Gus Hoefling, the Phillie strength and flexibility teacher, put the spring squad through some loosening-up exercises. Observing the drill near the door to the team's locker room, a cadre of sportswriters waited to talk to the one Phillie not yet out on the field, the one man who hasn't missed a game in his three years with Philadelphia but who hadn't worked out for the first two weeks of practice, the man who hadn't even come out of the trainer's room: Pete Rose.

A couple of million American men can't get out of bed on Sunday mornings, and suddenly Pete Rose was among them. Overnight he had become middle-aged and mortal. He had a bad back, incurred, he claimed, while lunging to hit a tennis ball. The pain was so bad he couldn't put on his socks. So bad he could have run out a homer in the time it now took him to get into his car. So bad, Pete Rose said, "I had to laugh."

All during spring training, Rose had

Rose's intensity and hustle are mirrored in his protege, Oriole farmhand Tom Gioiosa

maintained the aplomb of the cartoon tough who takes a machine-gun burst in the thorax and then growls "Ya Missed Me" while downing a glass of water that sprinkles out of the holes in his chest. "Just because I got a bad back this week," he said, "that don't mean that the next week my groin's going to be pulled and my teeth will fall out the week after that."

But the fact is that when Ponce de Leon went dirt-biking through the Florida wilderness in search of the Fountain of Youth and returned with nothing but a bad back, he didn't pronounce his mission a success. Indeed, upon awakening on the Sunday before camp in his Cincinnati home, and having metamorphosed from a "32-33-34-year-old" into the body of Admiral Hyman Rickover, Pete Rose had to do a lot more than just laugh. There was, there had to be, that flashing consideration that he would never get those 494 hits, and never stand at first base having got them, to hear the swelling plaudits of the crowd and the country. Without that, then what?

Rose immediately saw a GP, an orthopedist and a neurosurgeon, and went to the hospital for X-rays. Says his brother Dave, who saw Pete that afternoon, "When Pete Rose goes to the hospital, something's the matter."

Rose appeared somewhat mentally,



if not physically, relieved several days later, when X-ray reports revealed nothing seriously wrong. He was in a jacket and tie, not in traction, appearing at Woodhull Hospital in Brooklyn to film a Union Fidelity Insurance commercial. Considering Rose's delicate condition, it was ironic that he was spending this excruciating day saying over and over into the camera: *Suppose you need a fairly common operation. First there's the free surgical consultation, then admitting costs, lab fees, medication . . . the operation itself and, then, add the cost of the room for an average stay.*

While Rose was saying those lines, actresses dressed in nurses' garb bustled around him to give the scene an authentic look. One attractive, bosomy blonde scotched one take when she accidentally brushed into Rose while—as per the director's instructions—she crossed in front of him.

"He was in my way," she sheepishly explained to the director.

"Well, *they* were in my way," Rose said, referring to her breasts.

The woman blushed bright red.

Rose got quickly into the role, not only because of his own coincidental brush with a hospital, but also because of all the commercials he has done this was the most lucrative. For Rose, money translates almost as easily as batting statistics into measurements of success. And he is driven to accumulate it—and to spend it on fancy cars (he has \$250,000 worth) and endless nights betting at the track—the way he does base hits. He literally couldn't understand how his friend Bench, then entering the first phase of the Dick Wagner Torture Machine (he subsequently signed a new three-year contract), could appear so blasé in the face of Wagner's renown for saving a penny rather than a Hall of Famer. "Bench says, 'I already got enough money,'" Rose muttered, with a look of bafflement.

Soon you've got a pretty hefty bill. How much does your current coverage pay? Not many plans pay all the bills, and what's left you pay out of your own pocket. But where does it come from? That's why, if you're a veteran, you'd better call this toll-free number now for a free information kit. . . .

"Cut! Okay, Pete . . . could you reach over with your right hand and hold up the sign with the phone number on it, please?"

Just standing, not to mention reach-

ing across his body with his arm, was almost impossible for Rose.

"Sure I was concerned," he said between winces. "Nothing like this ever happened to me before. I couldn't stand up. But the doctor says he didn't see anything wrong like a disc or nothing, so it'll just take time."

All the doc's painkillers and all the king's men couldn't make Rose feel any better again—and that included the constant back massages of his girlfriend, Philadelphia Eagle Liberty Belle Carol Woliung, that left her fingers sore. What bothered him most about the inactivity, he said, was "that I think it's important this time of the year to be out there working with all the new faces. Some new guys might think that Pete Rose don't work. Setting examples is important."

Rose dealt with all the press curiosity with utmost courtesy. To a sportswriter working in any city where Pete Rose is playing baseball, it is like God raining copy from heaven. To sportswriters in Philadelphia, the opening of the Phillie locker-room door had become something akin to the opening of a bow door on an LST at Omaha Beach. It would have made a good Parker Brothers game, the spaces around the board representing the cubicles of the athletes: "You have landed at Steve Carlton's cubicle . . . take two spaces back." "Luzinski is in trainer's room . . . take two spaces back." "Punched by Bowa, take five steps back."

Rose is always willing to accommodate, as long as it is part of the game. Beyond that, he isn't necessarily so forthcoming.

It is impossible to distill from Rose's baseball persona his off-the-field practice as a human being. He has made baseball his whole life and, viewed solely from that perspective, Pete Rose sees himself as pretty near perfect. *I play the game of baseball the way it should be played.* Asked to reflect on his career and to recite the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to him, Rose can't think of anything. He dropped a popup once. And he has struck out and made errors. But Rose claims he has never made a foolish play, never thrown to the wrong base, never run off the field when there were only two outs. "I'm always in the game," he says, "and I don't think anybody should have anything to say about what I do anywhere as long as I have my image on the field."

That's a tough, but rather rigged game in itself. Rose is so dedicated to baseball that his personal and emo-

tional life are in a state of arrested development.

How to view a 41-year-old divorced millionaire with two children who is, in all essential respects and identifying markings, nothing more than a Little Leaguer? First, Rose is much more charming than you might expect. He is more refined and personable than the description of his longtime friend Tommy Helms, who calls Rose fondly, "an animal."

Rose has what Bench calls "an innate ability to make people feel good and to make people feel involved. He's

Cheerleader Carol Woliung, a friend in Philadelphia



Karolyn with Fawn and Petey:
So much love there for Pete

got a great knack for remembering things and putting them in a certain way that is very funny."

And, adds Bench, "He's gotten more sophisticated since his early years. Pete's communicating better. He's finally reached a plateau where he's satisfied with himself and he can be more relaxed. I'm looking forward to more years with him now. For me, he's easier to accept and easier to be with. I like the way he is becoming. He's improved as a baseball player, but he's improved more as a person. It takes a little longer for some people."

Why so long? Rose's mania holds him as helplessly, innocently hostage as music held Mozart. As a result, some of his relationships, particularly with women, have been fluted with intolerance and insensitivity. Rose was too preoccupied listening to the game on the radio in his garage to hear more human demands.

Some people refuse to make allowances for that. Acquaintances were outraged, for example, when Rose ignored his ex-wife Karolyn while she was in the hospital two years ago with a blood clot.

"I didn't get flowers, and I didn't get a call or anything," Karolyn recalled, "but I accepted it because he was just busy playing baseball and they were trying to win a pennant."

And the Phillie wives were angered when Rose gave his game tickets to his girlfriend instead of to Karolyn.

"His family life away from the game of baseball has suffered a great deal because of his dedication to the game," says Mike Schmidt. "Pete has had probably what you would call a little bit of a rough, entangled sort of life outside of baseball. Measured by the number of friends that a guy has, I think Pete's probably been successful in those terms. Measured by money, he's been successful. But if you measure by the amount of love and kids and compassion and family life and things along those lines, Pete might not be successful. I think if Pete had that phase of his life to do all over again, he might wish it were different than it is now."

Rose doesn't agree with Bench about his new sophistication or with Schmidt's criticism. "I feel like I've always been like I am now," he says. "I've always been personable and nice off the field. I care for people. I care for people's feelings—what kind of season they're having and stuff like that. I wish everybody could hit .300 and win 20 games."

Rose was relaxing at his Gulf-front,

rented condo at Belleair Beach on Sand Key south of Clearwater. This afternoon he was alone. According to Bench and Rose's brother Dave, Pete is no longer the hell-raiser he was, collecting speeding tickets en route to his Sally League games in Georgia or climbing out the rear window of a car, crawling over the roof and sticking his head down in front of the windshield to spook the driver. He spends much of his time by himself and, when on the road with the team, prefers early retirement and room service to human companionship most of the time. "He's more of a loner than people think," says Dave. In the condo, Pete was reclining on a plump sofa, appearing very comfortable and free of back strain while partaking in one of his passions, watching the NCAA basketball tournament on TV. Watching sports on TV and going to the track are Rose's two main preoccupations. His third, 27-year-old Carol Woliung, is affable, cooks well and, as they say in baseball, will clean the extra dish when you've got to have it. She is blonde, extremely attractive and doesn't have a bad back.

"I have an out-ie," she said, fingering her navel as she walked by in her filament bikini and headed to the pool for a tanning session.

"Yeah, she got an out-ie," Rose said.

Probably no other aspect of Rose's pugnacious, self-absorbed character has generated more tongue-clucking by his peers than his indiscreet promiscuity. There have been a few publicized examples of it; one of his dates from the West Coast once hired a plane and pilot to fly over Philadelphia's Veterans Stadium with the message, "Peter Edward—C U In Frisco—Love Christy." That, said Rose, was embarrassing for Carol. And then there was a paternity suit filed by Terryl Rubio, a woman from Tampa.

Rose's response is simply that "if a guy doesn't like women he's queer, so if you want to say, no I'm not queer, then I'm not queer. If I had messed around as much as I was accused of messing around, I'd need 30 hours a day and I'd probably hit .210."

Rose did mess around enough to push Karolyn into filing for a divorce after 16 years of marriage. "He messed around in Cincinnati, in Philadelphia, in every city you can imagine," Karolyn says, but Rose never once has admitted to her that he did. Around the day the couple decided to separate, Rose went 5-for-5 against the Mets.

The estrangement has been painful for Karolyn because it means not only

severing ties to a man she says she still loves, but also nullifying her own identity as the quintessential athlete's wife—Mother Rose—the distaff mirror image, accepting and supporting, fully committed to her hellbent husband. Though she has been divorced almost a year and a half, Karolyn still hasn't begun dating.

"I'm just not ready, I guess," she said. "I really don't know what I'm waiting for. Sometimes I think that there's just no hope for me. I had a birthday yesterday. I just turned 40. Forty is old for me."

"There's not a day goes by without me thinking of everything. The saddest part of my life came on March 1 again . . . spring training. I find myself thinking, 'Well, I've got to get the kids' books ready for spring training and I have to get the tutors.' Then I find myself sitting down, and tears are in my eyes, and I say to myself, 'What are you doing? You know you're not going.'"

"Right now, I worry if Pete's all right. I worry, although I have not heard from him. He has a very bad back. I can remember one year when he had muscle spasms and he was playing a doubleheader in Cincinnati on a Sunday. And I got him dressed. It was the first time in my life I saw Pete really feeling bad. It worried me. Like it worries me now."

Her son Petey, 12, had just won a basketball tournament. And daughter Fawn, 17 and a senior at Oak Hills High School, had just been accepted to Ohio State where she hopes to take pre-med courses. Big Pete, in Florida, knew nothing of this. He would hear in a few days when Fawn's letter arrived. She included advice on how to take good care of his back.

"It's still lonely for my children," Karolyn said. "My daughter is strong, and more and more I see her father in her. She looks like her daddy. And Fawnie is a super athlete. She loves her father. But she gets very provoked at him. Her feelings are hurt because she wanted a little bit of attention and Pete just forgot about her."

"There's never a night that goes by without Petey and Fawn kissing me goodnight or good morning, and saying, 'I love you.' And you see them growing up. Petey still comes in bed by me, and it's cute, because he always says, 'Mom, you better give me arm-ies and leg-gies,' which is when I put my arm around him and I put my leg over him. And usually, when he's with his dad, Big Pete does the same thing. And Petey says, 'Mother, when I be-

come a baseball player, you can go on the road with me, and you can sit right down in front.'

"It's sad, because Big Pete had everything going for him. Everything. Our children . . . there's so much love there for their father. I really don't think Pete can accept the love that we have for him. Maybe it's tough for him to show emotion because all he knew was sports. Deep down, I'm sure Pete really loves them, but to express it—no. I think that's kind of hard for him.

"And that's very hard for Petey. Petey wants his daddy and his mother together. What do you say to a 12-year-old?

"People just don't know what love is. Eventually Pete will. Time. He just can't go on the way he is now. The happiest times are when you're with your children, and you see them growing up. I think Pete might miss that now. Sometimes I think Pete is probably very lonely. And it's a shame."

Informed of his wife's remarks, did Rose have any sympathy? "No," he answered. "She ain't a ballplayer's wife no more, is she? Why should she complain. She filed for the divorce, I didn't. You have to realize that she's still bitter. She don't know what the hell she's saying."

Rose's favorite statistic in this regard is that 60 per cent of all American marriages end in divorce. [The real figure is 40.] So, he said, "I guess if I have an all-American image, I should go through a divorce, because that's what all Americans do.

"Look, I went through a divorce that was my fault. I messed around and I paid for it. I had a nice wife, a good mother who raised my kids well. What else do you want me to do? Get on my hands and knees and try to make everyone forgive me? I see my son as much as I want. I just don't sleep there. That's the difference.

"I'm happy the way it is. What do I need a wife for? As far as being lonely, baseball is my substitute."

ON MARCH 12, PETE ROSE came up for the fourth at-bat in his three-hit career. Though his back was expected not to have long-lasting effects, it served notice that Rose is in his final years. But as Rose always says, your fourth at-bat of the day—even when you've got three hits already—is when you have to bear down hardest.

So perhaps the devil has finally come to get his due with Rose's health. And perhaps, in some Faustian trick, he might turn Rose into that aging Joe Hardy from *Damn Yankees*, leave him reaching for love and other neglected things even as he reached first base with his 4,192nd hit. But, according to legend, Faust's soul was finally rescued by a choir of angels, saying: "He who exerts himself in constant striving, Him we can save." *I play the game of baseball the way it should be played.*

Rose promised to arise from his stool and begin working out with the team on this date and true to his word—even though his back still wasn't fit for exertion—Rose suited up after the team's 10 a.m. meeting.

"It's just going to be great to smell pine tar again," Rose said, holding the soiled rag to his nose and pulling some bats from his locker. For the first time in weeks, his face was suffused with a delight that all the pain in a back can't diminish a jot.

At 10:18 a.m. Rose left the clubhouse, hollering playfully back at the writers, "Now you're going to go out and make a judgment whether I'm old or not."

Rose threw the ball to get loose and then walked toward the batting cage. With his left arm he steadied the batting helmet on his head. Then he puffed out his bully's chest, daring Fate that punk to plant a finger on him. At 10:42, he stepped to the plate, batting righthanded, to face some pitches from Tug McGraw.

As Rose gathered himself into his coiled stance, his hands up near his eyes and his bat falling almost flat backwards, there was the sense that somewhere a giant gear powering the very movements of the sun and the play of shadows on the green field had, at long last, come unstuck. The time of Rose's first BP in spring training each year is something that should be in the *Farmer's Almanac*.

"How about a breaking ball?" Rose said to McGraw.

"What do you want?"

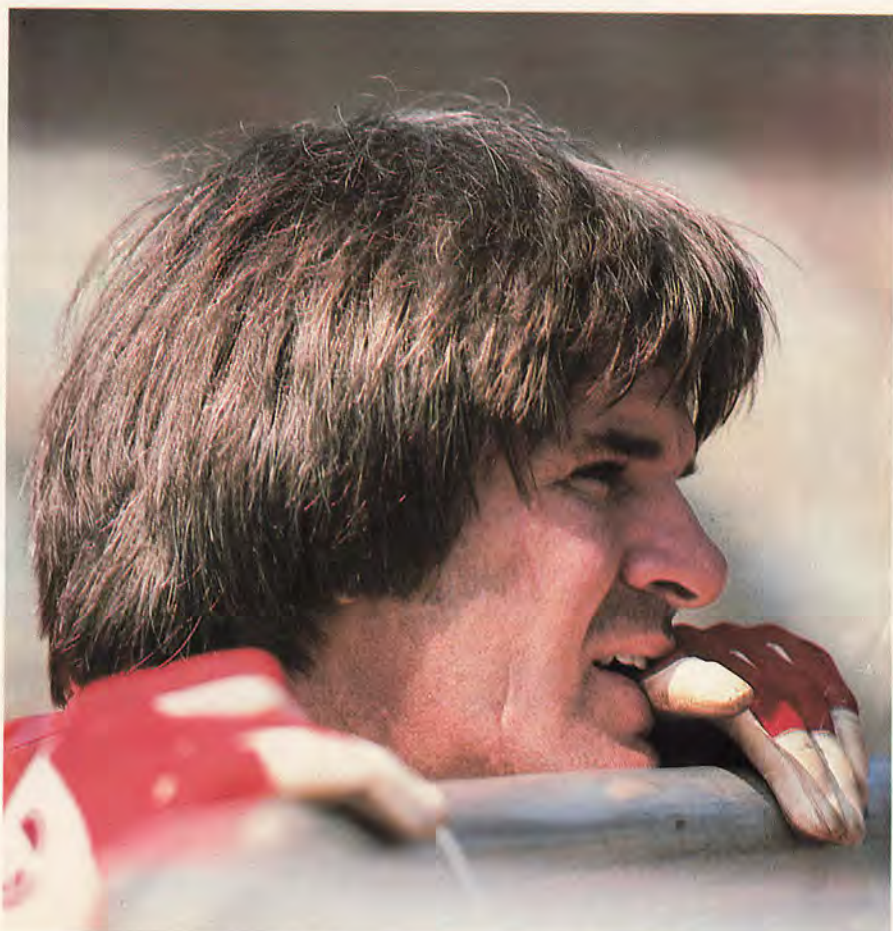
"How about a slider."

McGraw toed the rubber. Destiny, for Pete Rose, stood 60 feet 6 inches away. "Ready," he said.

The windup.

The pitch. ■

ROGER DIRECTOR is a prize-winning freelance writer living in New York.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHUCK SOLOMON

In pursuit of perfection, a man self-absorbed with his sport

THE PICKPOCKET

When you jump up to cheer for your team, he's only got eyes for your wallet

THE PICKPOCKET NAMED GREGORY takes his seat 31 rows from the third base line at Yankee Stadium. Rubbing his palms on his thighs, Gregory peers out at the field. There stand the New York Yankees, 22 times world champions, 32 times winners of the American League pennant, and 300 times unwitting accomplices to larceny.

"Those boys are going to make me rich," Gregory says.

For several years, Gregory explains, he has been working crowds at sporting events in New York and other major league cities. So have thousands like him. During his first year, he teamed up with a young man known in the trade as Moses. Staking out a refreshment stand, Gregory would watch wallets slide in and out of pockets. When he spotted a quarter-inch or more of cash sandwiched in the leather, Gregory nodded to his partner. Moses then strode up to the owner of the wallet and kissed him full on the lips.

"Moses look like he rose from the dead a year late," Gregory says. "He so ugly that if he kisses you I could take your billfold, your pants, your shirt, and all you be thinking is that somebody that ugly just slobbered you."

In the winter, Gregory and Moses hit the professional basketball games. Basketball fans were flush and less likely than fight fans to answer a Moses kiss with a left hook. And, unlike football fans, basketball people did not have their wallets buried under heavy coats.

In the summer, it was baseball. The average mark on the lower decks at Yankee Stadium, Gregory found, carried close to \$100 in cash and two credit cards. The typical wallet in a Shea Stadium fan's pocket counted out to about \$80 and one credit card. "The vics [victims] at Shea didn't have the same bread, but they was a lot more surprised by that kiss from Moses," Gregory remembers. "Maybe you expect you could get kissed in the Bronx,

BY MICHAEL DALY ♦ ILLUSTRATION BY WILSON McLEAN



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but never in Queens."

During their 11-month, one-week partnership, Gregory says he and Moses cleared \$20,000. They might still be working the stands together if Moses had not been in a hurry to get to his cousin's wedding one afternoon in July.

"We was at Shea by a hot dog stand and it was maybe the second inning," Gregory remembers. "This dude in blue walks up, orders himself a beer, and pays with a \$50 bill. Now, if a man pays with a fifty, that usually means he got a lot more in his kick."

When Moses saw the clerk count out \$49 in change, he looked over at Gregory and raised his eyebrows. Gregory shook his head. The man was wearing a blue T-shirt and Gregory knew that policemen tend to favor this color even when they are off-duty. Moses raised his eyebrows again. Gregory shook his head again. Moses, who had to leave for his cousin's wedding in 15 minutes, stepped up to the man and puckered.

"God looks after drunks and fools," Gregory thought as he stepped up behind the mark. As the first two fingers of Gregory's right hand fished out the wallet, the man bent over. Gregory figured this was a reaction to Moses' kiss. Then Gregory saw the man yank a revolver with a two-inch barrel from a holster strapped to his right ankle.

"I'm going to kill you," the man said to Moses.

"Police!" Moses screamed.

"I am the police," the man said.

Slipping through the crowd, Gregory ducked into a men's room. In the wallet was a Patrolmen's Benevolent Association card. Gregory pocketed \$109 and ditched the wallet in a toilet stall.

Three hours later, Gregory was picked up at his room on the fourth floor of the Edison Hotel in Manhattan. The arresting detective asked Gregory if he had picked the off-duty cop's pocket with his right hand. Deciding this was no time to begin telling the truth to officers of the law, Gregory held up his left hand. The detective placed Gregory's left hand in the top drawer of the bureau. The detective then slammed the drawer closed.

When they got to Central Booking, the arresting officer ran Gregory's arrest sheet. There were the usual juvenile arrests for assault, burglary and disorderly conduct. Then came a spate of larceny arrests from the time Gregory was apprenticing with a master pickpocket. The ensuing five-year stretch without an arrest was a testa-

ment to his instructor's skill.

"What did you do, retire for a few years?" the detective asked when Gregory was thrown into the cage.

"Just got smart," Gregory said.

"I'm going for food," the detective said. "You want a roast beef dinner or something?"

"With mashed and gravy?" Gregory asked.

"Sure," the detective said. "Salt and pepper? How about a slice of pie?"

"I'll pay you when I get out," Gregory said.

"You got it," the detective said, scribbling down Gregory's order.

An hour later, Gregory's stomach started to growl. For the next three hours, all Gregory could think of was roast beef with gravy and mashed. At the end of six hours, Gregory asked one of the cops still in the squad room when the detective was getting back with the food. "He went home," the cop said.

"Give me a beatin'," Gregory said. "Just give me roast beef."

Exactly 11 hours later, as he was herded into the detention pen at the Queens Criminal Court building, Gregory was handed a stale bologna sandwich. "Don't hit nobody with it," one of the other prisoners said. "You might kill them."

At the arraignment, Gregory learned that Moses had recounted to the police a complete history of their partnership. The police had then rummaged their files for all reports on robberies at sporting events involving assault with an ugly face. "They could get you on 20 counts," Gregory's court-appointed lawyer said. "Plead guilty and take a year."

Sentenced to 12 months at the Correctional Institution for Men on Rikers Island, Gregory was lodged in a cell next to a burglar known as "Attempted." Reputed to be the most inept criminal in New York City history, Gregory's neighbor got this name from a police sergeant who noted that all 52 entries in the man's yellow sheet carried the word "attempted."

"I never did no crime," Attempted told Gregory. "They always catch me when I'm attemptin'."

Sharing the popular disdain for stool pigeons, Attempted listened with great sympathy to Gregory's story. "You should never hook up with anybody," Attempted said.

"I ain't a cannon," Gregory said, a cannon being a pickpocket who is deft enough to lift a wallet off an undistracted mark.

"When I go to the ballgame, and

there's a home run or something, all I see is that little white ball," Attempted said. "There's a home run, I wouldn't feel a little tug at my back pocket."

"You should give up attemptin' and be a consultant," Gregory said.

Over the next 12 months, these words circled through Gregory's brain. His first day out, Gregory says, he caught the IND subway to Yankee Stadium. In the third inning, a Yankee hit a long fly ball. Leaping to their feet, all but one of the 20,000 people in the park watched the ball rocket away from the plate. Gregory watched the crowd. As the ball sailed over the left-field wall, Gregory tapped the man in front of him on the shoulder. "The guy doesn't feel a thing," Gregory told himself.

And now, perched on his seat 31 rows back from the third base line, Gregory watches his nine partners, the men most people call the New York Yankees baseball team, trot onto the field. "These partners won't ever give me up," Gregory says.

Baseball is the perfect game for picking pockets, he says. Prizefights and basketball games cannot be counted on for that moment of transport. Unless there is a brawl on the ice, hockey is too fast.

"Football would be aces if they wasn't putting all that coat between me and the money. You don't make your hit after the play's gone down, when they're all up and cheering. They'll still feel the hit. The time they don't feel the magic fingers is when the play's going down. With baseball and football, you got that second when the ball's flying around. That's my second. A thousand of those seconds and I could retire."

As Al Bumbry, the first batter for the Baltimore Orioles, steps up to the plate, Gregory's eyes flicker up and down the row in front of his seat. The first pitch by Tommy John of the Yankees nicks the outside edge of the strike zone. A man sitting on Gregory's right glances over at the pickpocket and sees a bushy-haired fan with thick glasses and the build of a large canary. Gregory returns the glance and sees a gold Omega watch. "A good timepiece means a healthy stash," Gregory will say later.

A foul tip. A ball, outside. Bumbry tries to check his swing on an outside curve, but hits a grounder toward Graig Nettles, the third baseman. Diving, Nettles traps the ball. He whirls and sidearms to first. Bumbry is out by a stride. The man with the watch is out of his seat. Gregory is smiling.

"He was getting primed," Gregory will say later.

After Ken Singleton dribbles out, the Yankees come to bat. Leading off, Willie Randolph flies to right on the first pitch. Then Ruppert Jones bunts. He is thrown out by four steps. Bob Watson strikes out. The man with the watch slumps and rubs the back of his neck. Gregory's smile widens. "It is good for them to get depressed," Gregory will say later. "They go far down, they go up that much higher when something good happens."

The Orioles head for the dugout. The man with the watch calls for a beer. Gregory's eyes follow the wallet as it comes out of the man's right rear pants pocket and unfolds to reveal a wad of bills.

The first two Baltimore batters go down. Then Doug DeCinces walks. After the second pitch, DeCinces bolts and slides into second. Bucky Dent is waiting with the ball. The man with the watch leaps to his feet, waving his arms. Gregory nods his head. "The second time he was up, the man was almost ready," Gregory will say later. "Almost, but not quite."

The bottom half of the second inning and the top of the third slog by without a hit. Nettles leads off the bottom of the third. A groan wheezes out of the man with the watch. Nettles is batting .148. He has been removed for a pinch-hitter three times in the last three games. The day before, he smashed a light fixture on the runway and left the park before the end of the game. "I told myself if something happens with Nettles, it would be time," Gregory will say later.

The first pitch is high and outside. The second pitch is low and outside. The third curves over the outside corner. Nettles connects with the fourth. As the ball is hit, the man with the watch rises. So does Gregory. The ball lands in the fourth row of the rightfield stands. Gregory is already heading for the men's room. "I could have given him a shave. His brain wasn't down there with his money. His brain was up there with the ball."

Stepping into a toilet stall, Gregory removes \$119 and an American Express card from the wallet. As he leaves the men's room, Gregory drops the wallet in a trash bin.

"Didn't you stay to see who won?" Gregory is asked.

"I know who won," Gregory says. "I won—119 dollars to none." ■

MICHAEL DALY is a contributing editor for *New York magazine*.

O, WHAT A LOVELY WAR

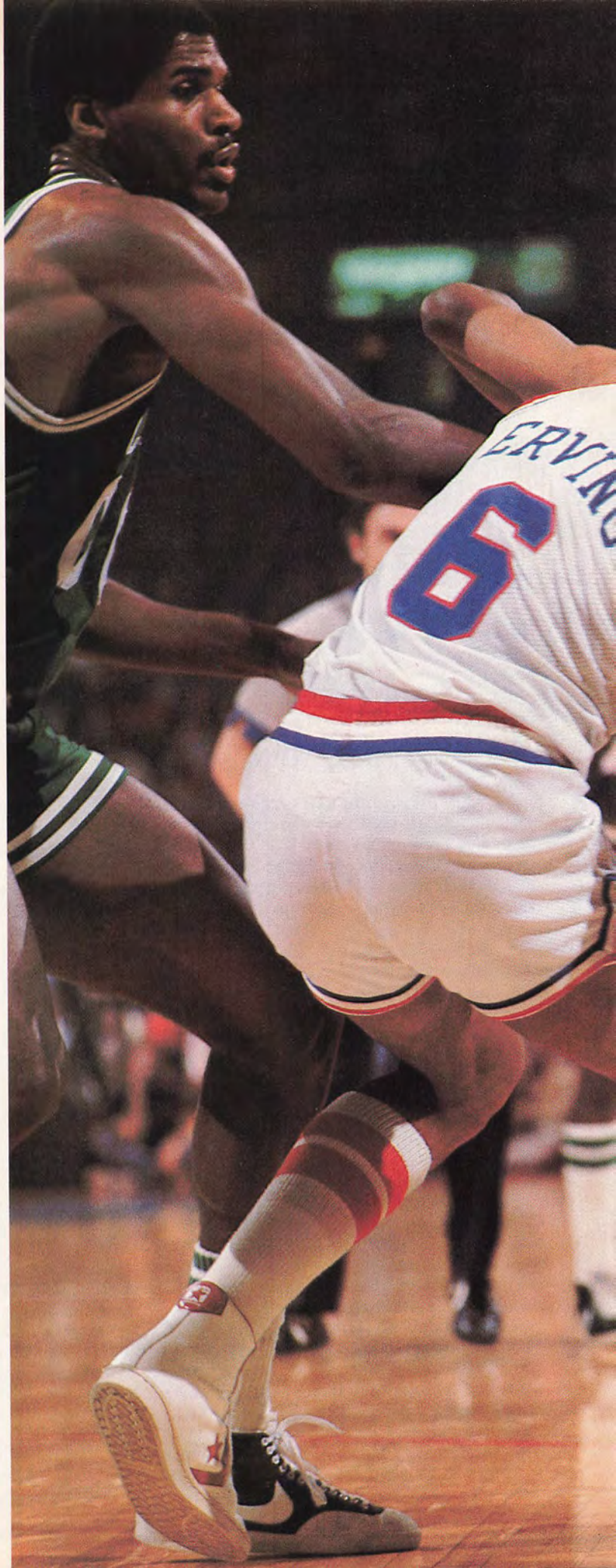
From Russell vs. Chamberlain to Bird vs. Erving, Boston and Philadelphia have been inspiring each other to new heights

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE THIRD GAME of last year's classic playoff series between the Boston Celtics and the Philadelphia 76ers, Philadelphia coach Billy Cunningham made a strategic adjustment that will be debated for as long as grown men dribble for money. Cunningham had watched his leading rebounder, Caldwell Jones, spend two evenings chasing Larry Bird across the Boston parquet to little effect. Not only had Bird torn apart the 76ers (67 points, 26 rebounds), but he'd also kept Jones away from the boards (a total of 12 rebounds, about half his average). Philadelphia had been lucky to escape with a split. Clearly, an adjustment was needed.

Cunningham's move was simple. He asked Julius Erving—who'd been guarding Cedric Maxwell—to cover Bird. Now Jones would trade elbows with Maxwell and hover near the boards (his production doubled immediately, 24 re-

BY JOE KLEIN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES DRAKE







Parish shot only 43 per cent against 76ers in '81 playoffs.

bounds in Games Three and Four), while Erving chased Bird.

All the explosive energy that Erving normally expended mid-air on offense was now concentrated on Bird, who dashed about the floor like a white mouse overdosed on amphetamines, looking for open space. The struggle took place at the periphery of the contest but it was awesome, and decisive: Bird was forced to struggle for position, playing peek-a-boo with screens; Erving chased, corner to corner, slith-

ering past Robert Parish and Maxwell's attempted blockades. Bird faked corner jumpers, drove to the hoop, and Erving was with him, like electrified cellophane. Bird faked drives and popped jumpers, and Erving had a hand in his face. Early in the first period, Erving suddenly materialized aloft and stuffed Bird on a drive.

Erving and Bird, arguably the two finest forwards in history, going head to head . . . but more than that, their private battle seemed to symbolize the contrasting styles and spirit of the two teams. Erving—supremely talented, instinctive, unemotional, loose, with the grace and flow of a fine jazz musi-

cian (it was not for nothing that Grover Washington Jr. played the national anthem before several playoff games in Philadelphia and dedicated a song—"Let It Flow"—to Dr. J). Bird—not quite so physically gifted, but furiously intense; more efficient than stylish, the ultimate technician. While Erving's 76ers were the last word in understated inner-city cool, Bird's Celtics were sweaty, muscular, almost awkward working stiffs. If he weren't so tall, one could easily imagine Larry Bird with a hard hat and lunch pail, working an assembly line somewhere in the Midwest.

"That's us," Maxwell said, proudly.



"A blue-collar team, a 9 to 5 team."

"Yes, they *are* kind of like that," agreed the Doctor. "And we're a jazz ensemble."

ERVING AND BIRD. BOSTON AND Philadelphia. After more than a decade, the fiercest rivalry in professional basketball had resumed center stage. The two finest players going head to head, the two finest teams ... it almost was like the good old days, when Bill Russell and Wilt Chamberlain would lead their teams in playoff battles that seemed always to come down to the final buzzer. Almost, but not quite.

Have two players ever dominated a team sport as Russell and Chamberlain did basketball in the 1960s? From the moment of their first encounter, at Boston Garden on November 7, 1959, they established standards of excellence that probably will never be equalled: Russell had 22 points and 35 rebounds in that 115-106 Boston victory, Chamberlain had 30 points and 28 rebounds. "Nowadays, just about every team has a mobile big man," says Larry Costello, the playmaking guard for Syracuse and Philadelphia in those days. "But until the late 1960s, the only competition Wilt had was Russell, and vice versa. When they

Toney was brilliant early, ineffective late.

played most of the other teams in the league, it was just no contest."

The statistics were mind-boggling: In 1962, when Chamberlain scored 100 points in one game, he *averaged* 50.4 and led the league in rebounding with a 25.7 average. Russell, though not so interested in statistics as Chamberlain, had his moments too: Eight times he pulled down 40 or more rebounds in a game, and once had 51 against Syracuse in 1960.

But more than that, Russell and

Chamberlain yanked the NBA out of the shadows and into the national spotlight for the first time. In the late 1950s, calling the NBA a "national" league was rather optimistic. It consisted of eight teams, concentrated mostly in the Northeast, and included such thriving urban centers as Syracuse, Rochester and Fort Wayne. The crowds were minuscule. But the spectacle—and it was a spectacle—of two giants, both marvelous athletes, banging away at each other captured the public imagination as basketball never had before.

Their confrontations were direct, immediate—more accessible to the casual observer than the peripheral wrangling of Erving and Bird in 1981—and easily transformed into the athletic ersatz-mythology that people like Howard Cosell and Brent Musburger seem to love: It was the classic match between a boxer (Russell) and a puncher (Chamberlain), brains against brawn, teamwork against individual enterprise and, to an unfortunate extent (in the public mind), good against evil.

Good almost always triumphed. The Celtics won eight consecutive championships. The Philadelphia teams were caricatured as Chamberlain—brooding, overpowering, selfishly piling up statistics—plus some other guys. The Celtics were the Dallas Cowboys of basketball: America's Team, or at least, Red Auerbach's. He was a tyrant; they were selfless, especially Russell, who clogged the middle as no one would ever again.

The reality was a bit more complicated than the caricatures. Russell, who says he never bought the media's badmouthing of Wilt, knew how good Chamberlain was. What's more, he claims they were fast friends off the court, often going to dinner together and hoisting a few. And it wasn't only Russell and Chamberlain. "When we were in Philly," K. C. Jones recalls, "we would have dinner at Wilt's mother's house and then drive to the game together."

Sam Jones, who loved tormenting Wilt during games, remembers one time that he pushed too hard and Chamberlain came after him. "I ran over to the bench and picked up a stool to defend myself. Luckily—for me, I think—people got between us and broke it up. The next time we were in Philly, Wilt showed up at our hotel and took me over to his mom's for dinner. His mother asked me if I really intended to hit her boy with that stool and I said, 'Yes, ma'am, I did.'"

There are those who believe, though, that the off-court socializing was part of the continuing battle. "If Russell took Wilt to dinner," says Howie McHugh, the ancient Celtic publicist, "he must have had an ulterior motive. I always had the feeling he was toying with Wilt, psyching him out. If we were up by 20 points, Russ would lay off and let Wilt score 17, then come back and shut him off."

"The rivalry between those two guys was so intense it ran into the offseason," says John Havlicek. "Russell would wait until Chamberlain signed his contract, and then come in and sign for \$1 more."

Inevitably, the individual rivalries extended beyond Russell and Chamberlain, to the other members of the teams. For Tom Heinsohn, the contest was against Tom Meschery, the muscular Philadelphia forward, and as often as not it would end in a fight. "With only eight teams in the league, we'd play each other more often than they do now and so we knew each other better," says Heinsohn. "I had to change my game because of Meschery. He knew I'd always dribble once before I took my jumper, so I'd have to make adjustments."

For Philadelphia forward Chet Walker, the nemesis was Satch Sanders: "Sometimes I'd try to psych out Satch by not shooting, let him think he had my number and get overconfident, then I'd burn him toward the end of the game."

When burned, Sanders employed elemental strategy: "The games were a lot rougher then. You could get away with more. If you couldn't keep up with your man, you beat up on him."

The regular-season games were tough enough; the playoffs were Armageddon, often involving the crowds. "Red [Auerbach] would just taunt those Philly crowds with his cigar," says Havlicek. "Walking on and off the court there was like Pearl Harbor." Besides pride, another factor made the playoffs more intense than in recent years—money. "Heck, if we won that Philly series, we stood to make \$1,600 each," says Sanders. "That was serious money. If we won the championship—usually against Los Angeles—we made \$2,800."

"Today it's almost a downer for a guy who makes \$300,000 to work another month and a half for only \$30,000," says Bob Cousy. "I'd rather be on the beach in Acapulco."

In 1960, Chamberlain's first season, the Celtics beat the Philadelphia Warriors in a six-game playoff. They won

the final game at the buzzer when Heinsohn tipped in a desperate heave by Bill Sharman. "It was my greatest moment," Heinsohn recalls. "The game was in Philly and you never heard 11,000 people go silent so fast."

Two years later, Boston and Philadelphia played another classic—a seven-game series in which the home team won each game. It was finally decided when Sam Jones scored with two seconds left.

The rivalry waned for several years after that. The Philadelphia Warriors moved to San Francisco, and were demolished by the Celtics in a five-game championship series in 1964. Meanwhile, the Syracuse Nationals had moved to Philadelphia in 1963 and become the 76ers. On January 13, 1965, the Warriors traded Chamberlain back to Philadelphia (for Lee Shaffer, Connie Dierking and Paul Neumann), setting the stage for what many considered the greatest Boston-Philadelphia playoff series—at least, until 1981.

The series went the full seven games in 1965, and all were good—but two were epic. In Game Four, Hal Greer of the Sixers threw up what must have been a 35-footer to tie the game at the buzzer, and Philadelphia won in overtime. "I think the Philadelphia timekeeper had something to do with that," says Havlicek. "Greer got the ball with two seconds left, dribbled it a couple of times, then shot. It's just humanly impossible for all that to have happened in two seconds. But what the heck, it was a great shot."

Havlicek's memory was off a bit. Greer never dribbled. "I just got the inbounds pass and slung it up," says Greer.

The last game of that series will always be remembered for its final five seconds. It was the 17th time that Boston and Philadelphia played that year, and each team had won eight. The score was 110-109, Boston. The Celtics had the ball. Russell stood behind his end line, ready to toss it in to Sam Jones or Havlicek and end the game. He tossed it ... and the ball hit a guidewire strung from the mezzanine to hold the basket in place. Russell fell to his knees, banging the floor with his fist.

Now, it was Greer's turn to toss it in. "I'd seen what happened to Russell," says Greer, "and I guess I was thinking a little too much about that damn wire, because I threw the ball in to Chet Walker with a flatter trajectory than I might normally have—and then Havlicek came from out of no-

where, and it was gone. Where *did* that man come from?"

It was one of the most famous moments in playoff history: Havlicek steals the ball. "The thing I remember best is what happened right afterwards," Havlicek says. "The fans tore my shirt off. They pulled so hard at my shoulder straps that my collarbones were rubbed raw. They pulled my shorts down to my knees. Years later, I went to a party and saw a woman with what seemed to be a little piece of rag pinned to her blouse. It was a piece of my jersey. She always wore it."

AFTER THE 76ERS TOOK A 3-1 LEAD IN last year's playoffs, Billy Cunningham found himself thinking of 1968.

"Hey, Billy, you think it's in the bag?" a reporter asked.

"In the bag?" Cunningham—tie loosened, shirt sweaty, smoking a cigar of Auerbachian proportions—allowed himself a bit of a smile. "Against the Celtics? I remember one year we had them down three games to one, and they came back to beat us. I was sitting on the bench with a broken wrist, and it was probably the worst experience of my life."

The year was 1968. The Sixers were awesome—they had won the championship in 1967 with a team later voted the greatest in NBA history. More important, they had finally beaten the Celtics, 4-1, in a playoff series. They breezed through the regular season in 1968; the Celtics, seemingly past their

prime, had finished eight games behind. Russell was now the Boston coach, and coming to the end of the line as a player. The time seemed ripe for the 76ers to administer the *coup de grace* to the Celtic dynasty.

It turned out to be an awful series, and an awful time. The night before the first game, Martin Luther King was murdered. Many of the players had no desire to play basketball with dozens of cities across the country in flames. George Kiseda, a reporter for the Philadelphia *Bulletin*, phoned Walker, who said he thought the game should be postponed. "The Philadel-

*Before getting headaches,
Cheeks gave some to Celtics.*



phia management later blamed me for losing the series by writing that column about Walker and *putting thoughts* in the other players' heads," says Kiseda, now of the *Los Angeles Times*.

None of the games was very close. Boston won the first by nine, then lost the next three by nine, eight and five. Since Philadelphia had the home-court advantage, Boston would have to play two of the last three games on hostile turf. After the fourth game, Sanders recalls, Russell called a meeting. "He said, 'Let's take things one step at a time. Not even one *game* at a time. Let's try to win each *quarter*.'"

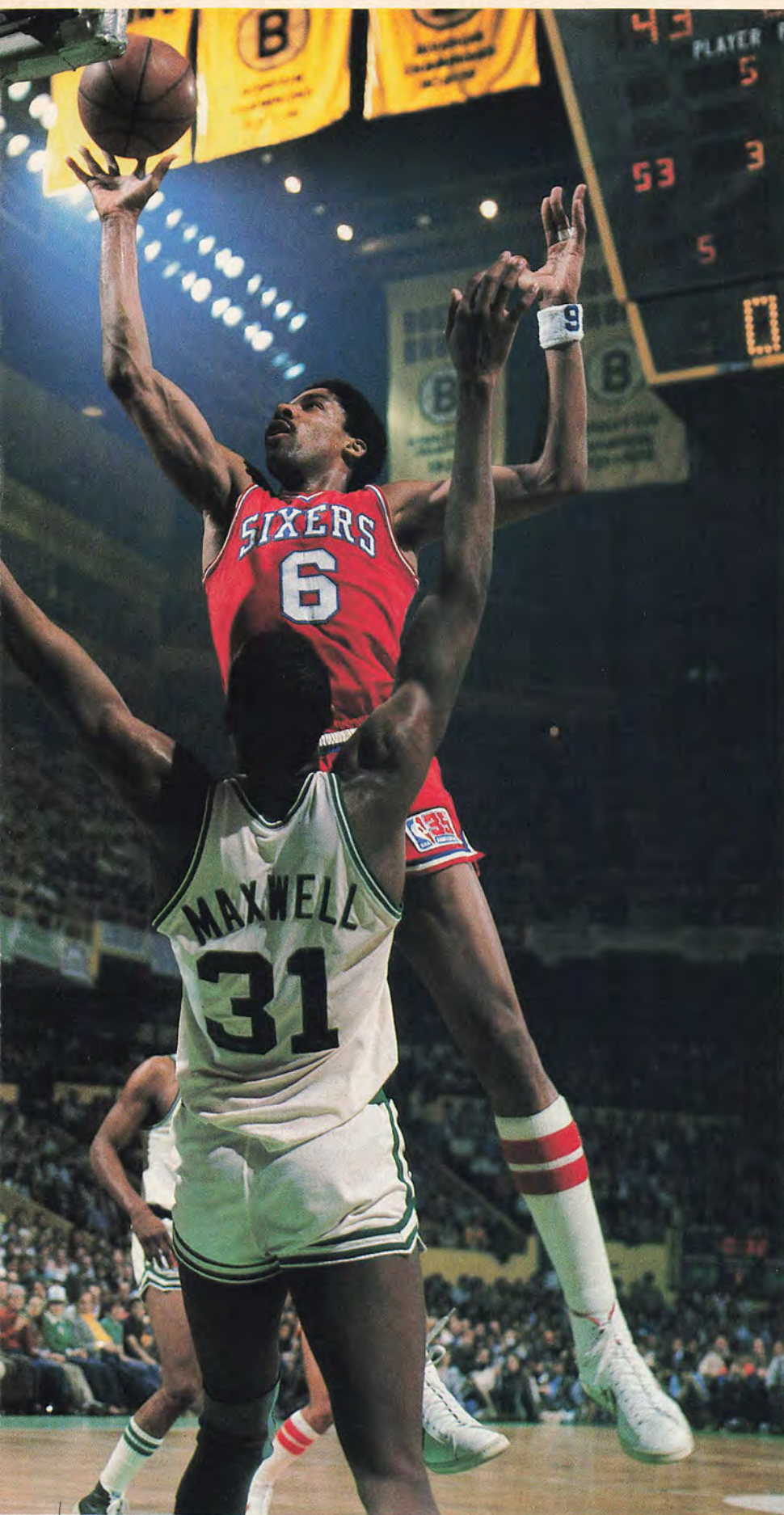
The Celtics lost three of them, but it made little difference. They blew out Philadelphia by 18 points in Game Five and by eight in Game Six with Havlicek assuming—for the first time, really—the leading role. The seventh game was bizarre. Chamberlain took only two shots in the second half. Coach Alex Hannum didn't know why and Chamberlain, if he knew, wouldn't say. The consensus was that Chamberlain was just being ornery. The blame for losing the series was placed, as always, on his shoulders.

"Wilt never did get a break with the press," Kiseda says. "Part of it was his fault, of course, but look—in 1965, Russell makes that bonehead play at the end of the game, but gets off the hook because Havlicek steals the ball. Philadelphia loses, and who's the goat? Wilt. They'd played Boston even for 16 games, then they lose the last one in the last second and Wilt is called a loser, and selfish. In 1968, I checked the Sixers' charts of how often the ball went into the pivot, and how many points they'd get out of that. It was, by far, their most effective play. Anyway, the reason Wilt didn't take any shots was that the ball just wasn't coming to him. If I remember correctly, it didn't come in to him at all during the fourth quarter. Of course, Wilt should have *called* for the ball—and I suppose no one will ever know why he didn't."

In any case, it was the end for Wilt Chamberlain in Philadelphia. He was traded after the playoffs to Los Angeles. It was also the beginning of the end for the 76ers. Walker was traded the next year, and Cunningham jumped to the ABA. The team slid down and down: from the then best record in NBA history, 68-13, in 1966-67, to the worst, 9-73, in 1972-73.

The Boston-Philadelphia rivalry languished for almost a decade. The teams met again in 1977, when Dr. J





led the Playground All-Stars—McGinnis, Free, Joe Bryant et al—to a seven-game victory over the Havlicek-Cowens Celtics. In 1980, a more seasoned and serious Philadelphia team dispatched Boston in five games. With the addition of Parish and Kevin McHale, Boston was stronger in 1981 than the year before. Both teams finished the regular season at 62-20. For the first time since 1968, the Philadelphia-Boston series had become the premier attraction of the season.

BILL FITCH IS A GREAT BELIEVER IN the law of averages. Just before Game Five last year, with the Celtics down 3-1, he told his club if it could win this game at home, then it could go back to Philadelphia and try again. "We'd lost how many—11 straight?—in that building, and we had to win one sooner or later. The law of averages was on our side. And if we could do that, then we'd have them in the hole. Psychologically, that would be worth 10 points at halftime in Game Seven, which would be in our building."

It might be helpful to consider, for a moment, just how it was that the Celtics won the home-court advantage that enabled them to play two of the last three games on the creaky old Garden parquet. They got it, at least in part, by espionage. Specifically, they got it because Fitch was kicked out of a late regular-season Celtic-76er game. In the locker room, he turned on the TV and watched Cunningham diagram the Sixer plays on his clipboard during timeouts. Fitch sent appropriate countermeasures to his bench via messenger, and the Celtics won 98-94. That victory gave the Celtics the home-court advantage.

All of which seemed academic as Game Five came down to its final minutes as Philadelphia led 109-103 with 1:51 left. But then the roof fell in. Parish stuffed Andrew Toney. Erving threw away an inbounds pass. Bobby Jones dribbled a ball off his leg; seconds later, he blew a short jumper. Final: Boston 111, Philadelphia 109.

The Philadelphia dressing room was silent, the players battered. Lionel Hollins had a cut over his left eye. Jones was in shock. Pat Williams, the GM, later recalled: "I think that may have been the worst moment for me. I mean, people had been congratulating me on our victory. . . ."

The sixth game followed the pattern

Erving's jazzy moves were missing down the stretch.

of the prior two—was it possible that the Celtics had to reach a certain point of cliff-hanging desperation before their peculiar form of magic kicked in?

In the third quarter, with the Celtics down by 15, the game began to get rough. Maxwell decked Toney with an elbow; Darryl Dawkins shoved Maxwell into the crowd, where he got into a fight with a fan. Dawkins waded into the melee to retrieve Maxwell. "Did you get involved in the fight?" he was asked later.

"Shoot," said Dawkins. "If I'd gotten into that, the bodies would have been flying by the twenties."

On the court, the bodies *were* flying by the twenties. Tiny Archibald continued his reckless driving, sucking bodies after him like light into a black hole. The pileups, arms and legs tangled together, were the sort of thing one might expect in a rugby match between the South African Springboks and Grambling. The physical style of play certainly was working to the advantage of the beefy, working-class Celtics; the elegant Sixers were being knocked silly. Finally, McHale blocked Toney as he drove the lane with 14 seconds left in the game and Philadelphia losing by one. It was the second straight game that Toney had been stuffed in the closing moments—was it possible that Toney's two brilliant games early in the series were the best thing that could have happened to the Celtics? "I'd certainly rather have Toney taking that last shot than Erving," said Fitch.

Erving. Where *was* he, anyway? After the game—final score: Boston 100, Philadelphia 98—he was behind closed doors with Cunningham. They were shouting at each other. Later, much later, after the reporters had pestered him about Cunningham and what was wrong ("I think we have to get more players involved in the offense," he said, euphemistically. Translation: "Can't somebody else take Bird? I'm getting tired."), after all that, Erving sat alone, slowly tugging on his clothes, looking exhausted and surprisingly old. Tiny ringlets of gray studded his Afro. He had shot 5 for 17. Cunningham's strategy, which had appeared so brilliant at first—Game Three seemed years ago now—was beginning to sour. The idea that Erving, the *Doctor*, would have to concentrate on defense had, in a slight, almost imperceptible way, put the entire team on the defensive. The 76ers were wavering, hesitating in the clutch—even so sure a player as Bobby Jones seemed to have lost his confidence.

Game Seven was the same as five and six, only better. The Celtics fell behind, then rallied and trailed by only five at the half—a moral victory?—then fell further behind again in the third quarter, then rallied again. By the beginning of the last period, the teams were like two exhausted heavyweights in the 15th round of a close title fight, groggily trading flurries of punches. First, it was Boston, scoring eight straight points and taking the lead, 79-75. Then Philadelphia, 14 points (while Boston managed only three free throws), 10 by Erving, who suddenly took control. Philadelphia was up 89-82 with 5:23 left.

The next five minutes were a nightmare of such magnitude for Philadelphia that the stark horror of the official score sheet only begins to tell the story:

4:21 Bird steals Erving pass
4:03 Bird steals Bobby J. pass
3:25 Parish blocks Dawkins
2:59 Archibald steals Hollins pass
2:08 Bird blocks Erving
0:48 Carr steals Erving pass

And that, folks, was the entire Philadelphia offense for almost the last half of the last quarter of the last game (with the exception of one Maurice Cheeks free throw—he missed the other, which would have tied the game). What the score sheet didn't show was the sheer panic on the floor. The Sixers, who'd had good success pushing the ball up the court, suddenly stopped; they stumbled into a tentative halfcourt game. When Carr stole the Erving pass with 48 seconds left, the Doctor was free enough to hoist a jumper—but chose, in mid-air, to attempt a ridiculous crosscourt pass to Jones. Nobody seemed willing to chance a shot. Final score: Boston 91, Philadelphia 90.

Certainly, the Celtics had played excellent halfcourt defense. Certainly, the referees were loath to call anything less than armed robbery against the Celtics down the stretch (how *did* the Celtics manage 23 foul shots and the Sixers only 10 in the second half?). Certainly, Bird was incomparable. But why didn't Erving take that shot? Why did Jones keep dribbling balls off his knees? Whatever happened to Toney? Where did Dawkins disappear to when he wasn't slam-dunking and leading the league in nicknames? Why does Cheeks get headaches during the playoffs each year?

It may well have been the greatest playoff series in history. The Celtics had been marvelous. But, finally, it was a series that wasn't so much won

by Boston as it was lost by Philadelphia.

ATHLETES ARE NOT BIG ON PSYCHOLOGY. It is too abstract and, therefore, dangerous. In a game as fast and fluid as basketball, it isn't good to think too much. Even those players whose games are described as "intelligent" tend to be more instinctive than intellectual. Ask Bird about the technique of rebounding and he'll talk your ear off; ask him how Boston could keep coming back from such large deficits and he'll say, "It was a team effort."

Ask Parish and he'll say, "The Philadelphia series? I already forgot that."

Fortunately for the Celtics, winners aren't often asked such questions. Losers are.

Going into this season, the 76ers were faced with the same sort of questions they'd been asked since Wilt Chamberlain and Bill Russell first locked horns: Had teamwork beaten talent again? Did the Celtics simply have more *character*? Unanswerable questions. The problem was made worse by the fact that the Philadelphia franchise itself was beginning to seem rather shaky. Ever since 1976, when Erving arrived, the fans—in Philadelphia, an especially vituperative, unforgiving bunch—had been expecting a championship. After all, the conventional wisdom was that the 76ers were the most talented team in the league. When they lost to Portland in 1977, the team had apologized publicly in an ad campaign: "We owe you one." But they'd lost in successive years to Washington, San Antonio, Los Angeles... and now Boston. Attendance had been dropping all the while. In the seventh game of the Milwaukee series prior to the Boston disaster, the team had managed to lure just 6,704 people into the Spectrum.

"I found that very depressing," says Cunningham. "The Phillies were playing across the street and they drew 30,000—against the *Cubs*! I was hurt by that, and so were the players."

The betting was, with the city losing interest in the team, that there would be a major shake-up in the offseason. It was thought that Dawkins—good for several spectacular rebounds and dunks each game, but not much else—would be traded, if at all possible. Apparently, it was not possible.

"If we could have traded Darryl and upgraded our team, we would have done it," said Williams, just before the new season started. "But there



aren't many top-quality centers in the league, and they're just about impossible to get."

Was that a tacit admission that Dawkins would never be a "top-quality center"?

"I guess everyone had high hopes for Darryl—25 points a game, a dozen rebounds, all-star material," said Williams. "But he's been in the league for six years now, and after a certain point you just have to say, What you see with Darryl Dawkins is what you get."

So they went into the new season essentially unchanged—except for the potentially damaging memories of what had happened last year. There was also the festering resentment between Cunningham and Erving, who was about the only player willing to discuss the Boston series in any detail. "We should have stayed with the system that got us there. If you let our 1976 team alone, it would be like the shootout at the OK Corral, but this team—we run like a fine-tuned instrument, like a Swiss watch."

You mean Cunningham shouldn't have put you on Bird?

"I'm our best offensive player and I had to face-guard Bird, which was the

In the '60s, Chamberlain got the stats, Russell the titles.

most demanding defensive assignment. You try chasing that guy around the floor sometime. Our defense wasn't a problem in that series. Our problem was an offensive letdown, and part of that was because I was taken out of my game."

You argued with Cunningham about that during the series?

"Billy was yelling and screaming at times, and I didn't think it was necessary. He could have talked rationally, as we did in the past."

To which Cunningham replies: "There are lots of reasons why I made the switch, but those will stay with me. We needed Caldwell on the boards. Anyway, Bobby Jones played Bird a lot, too."

Poor Billy Cunningham. He would have to face the questions and the doubts about his team's character through six months of Tuesday nights in Detroit and Thursday nights in Utah, through an 82-game season that would be—for a team as good as Philadelphia—next to meaningless. He would have to wait until spring when,

with any luck, a Philadelphia team would face the Celtics for the 12th time in the playoffs. And then he would have to face the ghosts of Russell and Havlicek and the Joneses once more, to say nothing of the reality of Larry Bird.

As the season progressed, the Celtics appeared to grow stronger—especially in the backcourt, which had been their weakest spot last year. M. L. Carr replaced the fading Chris Ford as a starter. Just as important was Gerald Henderson's emergence as a quality NBA player; when Tiny Archibald was injured in February, Henderson stepped in and the Celtics suffered not at all. In fact, with Archibald and Bird (injured for a few games, and replaced by McHale who remained in the starting lineup) coming off the bench, Boston won 18 straight, a team record. The streak was ended quite convincingly on March 28 in Boston... by Philadelphia, a victory the Sixers needed badly.

As the playoffs approached, they seemed to be treading water. They had added Mike Bantom, a valuable forward, but had lost Dawkins for much of the season with a broken leg. Dawkins returned in late March, but his ability to contribute during the playoffs was even more questionable than usual. Harold Katz, the new Philadelphia owner, was publicly threatening to trade Dawkins if he didn't start playing up to his potential (a threat made less convincing by a new, five-year, multi-million-dollar contract that Dawkins signed during the season). Katz was also threatening to break up the team and bring in more rebounding strength if the 76ers didn't do better this year than last. By early April, Billy Cunningham's task seemed more difficult than ever.

What would you do if you were Cunningham? Bill Fitch was asked, just before the season. How would you prepare your team after what happened last year?

"I'd go back to the good old law of averages," Fitch said. "I'd tell them they were just *due* to beat the Celtics."

Given the formidable logic of that, Fitch was asked, how would he prepare *his* team?

"Look," he said, "we've got the law of averages on our side, too. How many years has it been since a team repeated as NBA champion?" ■

JOE KLEIN's critically acclaimed biography, Woody Guthrie: A Life, has just been released in paperback by Ballantine.

THE PUCK STOPS HERE

*At playoff time,
everybody takes shots
at the goalies*

THE GOALTENDER IS WORRIED. THE New York Islanders are a better team than the Toronto Maple Leafs, Chico Resch knows, but they haven't made that clear in the first six games of the Stanley Cup quarterfinals. Now it's down to a seventh game at the Nassau Coliseum, and the confidence that has driven this team all season has become a casualty of the playoffs.

This should be their season. Three years earlier, they overcame a three-game deficit against the

By Joe Gergen





Photograph by Leonard Kamsler

If you're worried
about cancer,
remember this.
Wherever you are,
if you want to talk
to us about cancer,
call us.
We're here to help you.



American Cancer Society
2,000,000 people fighting cancer.

THIS SPACE CONTRIBUTED AS A PUBLIC SERVICE.

Pittsburgh Penguins in the quarterfinals and took the champion Philadelphia Flyers to seven games in the semifinals. In 1976 and 1977, they extended the Montreal Canadiens in the semifinals. Now, in 1978, they have continued their advance by winning their first Patrick Division title.

Resch has become a hero in the process, solidifying the reputation he had earned in the Islanders' very first playoff appearance when, as a 26-year-old rookie, he charmed fans by kissing a goalpost in appreciation of an important save. But, for the first time in their history, the Islanders are in danger of taking a backward step. Resch is the stopper.

The Maple Leafs had come out hitting. Led by feisty Tiger Williams, they pushed the Islanders around, severely bruising Bryan Trottier and Mike Bossy. The Islanders won the three games played on Long Island, but had to go into overtime on two occasions.

Both goalies are sharp. Mike Palmateer, who created a media stir by eating popcorn before games, yields a first-period goal to Denis Potvin. Resch is beaten by Ian Turnbull in the second period. Beyond that, they are flawless. The pressure draws tighter on the Islanders. They are playing at home, and with everything to lose.

A third overtime game appears likely. Suddenly, Darryl Sittler, Toronto's leading scorer, breaks in on Resch. He makes an outstanding save. The fans release a sigh of relief. When Resch skates off the ice, he believes he has given his team momentum, provided the Islanders with a spark.

Indeed, the first great opportunity of the overtime belongs to the Islanders. Billy Harris goes down on a breakaway and, from his vantage point at the other end of the ice, Resch can see the opening between Palmateer's legs. But Harris' shot strikes Palmateer in the pads and caroms away.

Resch knows the next test will be his. Moments later, Lanny McDonald intercepts a pass, eludes a check and skates down the left boards to the face-off circle. Resch moves out and, as he does, McDonald fires a shot that sails over the goaltender's left shoulder into the top half of the net. Resch flings his stick to the ice in disgust.

He has played well enough to win most games. But not this one. A year later he will play the sixth and deciding game of the semis against the Rangers after Billy Smith declines the honor. Again, he will lose 2-1. That game will mark his last significant

Cup appearance. In 1980, Smith will become the playoff mainstay. By the 1981 playoffs, Resch will be in exile—in Denver.

There is a fine edge between winning and losing, between success and failure, in all professional sports. For the goaltender, it can be the cutting edge.

UNMASK THE GOALTENDER at your own risk. He doesn't care to be disturbed. It is playoff time in the National

Hockey League, reason enough to hang a sign from his nose: GONE CRAZY.

The expression is vacant. His mind has withdrawn into a safe crease at the back of his head. His eyes are activated by the sight of skimming pucks. He has entered a world of the living dead, alert only to the needs of the team, to the demands of the game, to the terror of the next goal.

Fingers point at him. He can feel them. And he can hear the questions raised not just by the fans in the cheap seats but by his teammates. Yield an early goal, an easy goal, and he can read discouragement in their expressions. He is guardian not only of the net but of their confidence.

If only he could make them understand. *Don't shoot the goaltender! He's flailing as fast as he can.*

He is the last defense. That's true at all times, but in the NHL the first 80 games are nothing more than stretching exercises, designed to prepare teams for the seven-week season by which they invariably are judged. The stronghearted and the fortunate among them will skate around the ice with the Stanley Cup. A goaltender can't win it alone. That's one of the first lessons of the sport. But a goaltender can lose it.

Shoulder that responsibility through a schedule that calls for a game almost every other night and frequent flights from Uniondale to Timbuktu, or even Edmonton. "It's hell," says Billy Smith, who has been the main man for the Islanders as they won the Cup the last two seasons.

"It's like a guy who says he's going to climb that mountain or fly a single-engine plane across the Atlantic," says Resch, whose playoff experience has been limited to telecasts since being traded to the Colorado Rockies. "You think, 'This is going to be a test of my character so I'm going to give everything I have.'"

To do that is to deflect distractions,

to shut off the telephone, to insulate oneself against the everyday aggravations that plague the human race. Many clubs aid the process by lodging their players in hotels, even before home games. "There isn't much of a life outside hockey during the playoffs," Resch says. "It's like you're in a glass ball, rolling around, protected from the outside world."

Teamthink is the desired state. Players are expected to eat together, to drink together (but not too much), to relax together. All for one, one for all. But the forced camaraderie frequently is lost on a goaltender. Even in a crowd. Solitary confinement is a condition of the job, one to which a goaltender becomes accustomed. Like Greta Garbo, the goaltender wants to be alone.

He has distinct needs, the goaltender has. And in the context of the playoffs, it is in his team's interest to humor him. Cigarette smoking was not permitted between periods in the shrine-like Canadian dressing room, but nobody raised his voice when Gump Worsley padded to the bathroom for a few drags to calm himself. To him was passed not only the torch but the matches.

Smith wants pampering. He doesn't like to skate; during the playoffs, he doesn't have to. The standing joke around the Islanders is that Smith breaks a sweat watching his teammates practice. Smith is the author of the joke.

As long as the goalie produces, his team will overlook strange behavior. No one minded that Jacques Plante knitted his own hats as long as it made him happy and he continued to win big games. And the Philadelphia Flyers didn't appear to notice when Pete Peeters, their fine rookie, moved a chair into the shower room and sat in silence long after an overtime defeat by the Islanders during the Cup finals two years ago.

After all, he is the scorekeeper. Nothing goes on the board that doesn't pass his inspection. Each mistake he makes is displayed in lights. Often, it isn't even his fault. No matter. The puck stops here.

The playoffs are conducted under a huge microscope. Suddenly, the goaltender is bigger than life. He is scrutinized almost daily by the press and analyzed by his own teammates. Does he appear confident or shaky? A hot goaltender can inspire a team. A hesitant goaltender, of course, can deflate it.

A goaltender lives in dread of the

soft goal, one that makes him appear weak and indecisive. The early moments are the worst. Tightness can grip an entire team, slowing the swift-skaters to a Zamboni pace, and the goaltender has to keep his team in the game. Teams will shoot from center ice at the outset, hoping to catch him in a similar state of paralysis.

That first save is a masterpiece, to be framed and treasured. The relief is immense. So few teams ever come back in the playoffs from a quick strike.

THE GOALTENDER IS silent. So are his Montreal teammates. It is the first day of May in 1965 and the best-known team in hockey is riding south on a bus from its playoff retreat in the Laurentian Mountains to the Forum.

It is a significant day for all, but particularly for the goaltender. Most of them have hoisted the Stanley Cup at least once in their careers. But Gump Worsley, completing his 12th season in the NHL, never has been so close. The first decade of his career had been spent with the New York Rangers. Now, two weeks before his 36th birthday, he will start the seventh game of the championship series against the Chicago Black Hawks.

Worsley is a man with a sense of humor and a thirst for good times. But the situation is constraining, the bus ride endless, the silence deafening. His roommate, John Ferguson, has not spoken to him. He has not spoken to Ferguson. On this day of days, Worsley swears he can hear himself think.

He is not thinking of Bobby Hull or Stan Mikita as he dresses in the Canadian locker room, with the ghosts of hockey immortals staring down on him. He is not thinking of the Cup and how much it weighs and how much champagne it holds. He is taking this game one save at a time. Stop that first shot. Give the team a chance. He has seen too many games decided, psychologically at least, before the crowd has settled into its seats.

The puck is dropped and Worsley awaits the test. The Black Hawks are moving, but suddenly Jean Beliveau, the Montreal captain, has gained control and he's streaking in the other direction. He shoots. He scores. Fourteen seconds into the game, Beliveau has beaten Glenn Hall.

Worsley's mind is racing. He has found his voice, which has been stilled all day. He's talking to his forwards. He's talking to his defensemen. But,

mostly, he's talking to himself. He is, he realizes, the only person listening.

Get ready. The Black Hawks will be tough now. They're cornered. And here they come. That's Camille Henry in close. Camille the Eel, a friend and teammate for years with the Rangers. But not now. Shot. Save. And back go the Canadiens. Goal.

And it's over, unless he gives it away. But on this night, Worsley is not feeling charitable, not even a little bit. Hall plays spectacularly at the other end. It doesn't matter. He failed to make the critical first save. The Canadiens win 4-0. And the pudgy goaltender with the comic-strip nickname has embraced the Cup of cheer. He will now attempt to prove it is bottomless.

NERVES CAN UNDERMINE a goaltender. They drain the color from a man's face, set his legs aquivering or seize his stomach. Hall was the patron martyr of all stricken goalies. He relieved the pressure before a game through his oral cavity. Sometimes, it is said, they had to carry a bucket out to the bench. Yet he was one of the finest ever.

Hall's condition was unusual only in that it did not disappear with experience. The first playoff game has left many a netminder shaken. Gilles Meloche, who backlined the Minnesota North Stars to the Stanley Cup finals last year, was in his ninth season when one of his teams finally qualified for the playoffs. He had faced thousands of shots while holding the fort alone against barbarian hordes. He was a man of 29. Yet, 15 minutes before his first playoff game, he broke into a cold sweat.

The picture every year is the same. It's of the guy who scores the winning goal, his stick raised above his head, while nearby a goaltender lies sprawled on the ice. The lesson? A goalie can only lose the Stanley Cup.

Saves, even big saves, are not recorded for posterity. They survive only as statistics, not as living memories. A goalie may take a particular save to the grave with him but he shouldn't expect others to care. "All they remember," says the hardboiled Smith, "is the [winning] goal and who was in net for it."

For every goaltender who falls short of the Cup, there's a goal that lingers in the psyche. For John Davidson, who carried the Rangers to the finals in 1979, it occurred in the second game against the Canadiens. The

Rangers had won the first game and were leading 2-0 in the second. "It got them back into the series," he recalls. "The puck came out of the corner, hit Lambert's kneecap and went through my legs. It still drives me crazy."

The inner game of hockey is played in the goaltender's head. At any hour of the day or night, a referee stands ready to drop the puck. For young goalies, it's a scattershot affair, not unlike Space Invaders. With experience, the goaltender channels that anxiety into a positive exercise. He programs his mind to do what Atari can't, to reinforce his confidence. Lafleur, wrist shot, right side. Save. Gretzky, behind the net, pass to Messier. Save. Bossy, circling in the slot, a blur. SAVE. A lunge, a kick, a catch. Back on your feet. Be ready for the screen. Looking good. "You always come out a winner," Worsley says. "And a guy on your team always comes out a hero, too."

"I think the biggest thing for a goalie is visualization," Resch says. "You see a 30-35 save game, you see every type save. If you're with an underdog team, you've got to start daydreaming about stopping 44 shots, getting in that zone. With a favored team, you don't want them to lose confidence."

"You want to relax physically but not mentally. You want to concentrate on seeing yourself making great saves, seeing your arms moving, seeing your legs moving. You don't want to see yourself skating around the rink after the seventh game. We all do, but we try not to."

That's one way of coping. The other is to project oneself elsewhere, to beam down on an isle of tranquility. Forget Long Island. Fantasy Island is a better choice. As he prepared to throw the final pitch of the epic 1978 playoff game between the Yankees and the Red Sox, with the entire season riding on the seams, Rich Gossage thought about the mountain lakes near his home in Colorado.

Bernie Parent used a similar device before playoff games with the Flyers, with whom he won two Stanley Cups. He would do his homework the night before, reviewing the scouting reports on opposing players. Then he would turn off the light and go fishing. "I'd set myself a nice trip to Quebec every June," he says. The expectation was as refreshing as the event, clear water and the only ice in the bottom of a glass.

Mental strength to Smith is selective amnesia. Forget about the big game until it's time to play. Seven consecu-

tive seasons in the playoffs have taught him to avoid advance screenings and anything else that might sap his energy. "I keep myself in a fog, an organized daydream," he says. "I can remember being with people during the playoffs, hearing them talking, and nothing would register. I go into a daze. I yawn before games and guys laugh at me. But I think they have the feeling I'm not going to let them down."

IN ITS PUREST FORM, IT'S A little boy's dream. Playing goal in the Stanley Cup playoffs with all of Canada watching on television. It's a lighter-than-air moment. "You build yourself up to a pitch that you feel you can fly without a plane," Worsley says.

It is the most difficult job in the sport, yet this is the most satisfying of times for a goaltender. Consciously or not, all his life he's been preparing himself to make the big save in the playoffs. His concentration has never been better. The awareness on the ice is acute.

"Once you get into that zone, it's a great feeling, a sensation of doing five different things at once," Resch says. "You're watching the puck, you're talking to the timekeeper, you're seeing something the referee isn't doing. You can concentrate on doing more than one thing at a time. You're just swinging around the crease. You're somehow above it."

The fall can be harsh or it can be gentle. Losers crash. Winners sag. "When it's over," Worsley says, "it's like sticking a pin in a balloon. You feel like a wet noodle."

The mental fatigue was such, Parent says, that the accomplishment didn't even settle on him until the morning after the Flyers' first championship. It was only when he read the paper that morning that the realization hit home. "My God, we won it," he said.

All this makes sense, of course, only to another goaltender. "You work all year to get yourself into a frenzy," Worsley says. "You work to make the playoffs and then get yourself sick over them. Like Glenn Hall. Figure that out."

THE GOALTENDER IS incredulous. Maybe he misunderstood the coach. But, no, Glen Sather is looking directly at him. At Andy Moog. He is asking Moog if he wants to play tonight for the Edmonton Oilers. In the first

game of the 1981 Stanley Cup playoffs. Against the Montreal Canadiens. In the Forum.

Moog is 21. He has appeared in exactly seven NHL games. He has spent most of his first professional season with the Wichita Wind of the Central Hockey League. What can he say? Yes, of course.

And one other thing. Thank you. He wants to play in this league. Here's the opportunity to prove himself under pressure. But what a spot! He swallows hard and tries to tell himself not to be nervous. No use.

The Oilers, a 14th-place team during the regular season, are counting on a kid to bring down the Canadiens. He knows what they're thinking as he skates onto the ice. "Andy Who?" that's what they're thinking. Time to show them. Time to show everyone.

The other Oilers aren't much older. They average under 25 years of age. Their star, in fact, is only 20. But Wayne Gretzky is at the top of his game. He assists on all three Edmonton goals in the first period. Trailing 3-1, Montreal storms back in the second period and Moog is under siege. But he turns the Canadiens away. Ten saves. No goals. Moog ultimately passes his first test 6-3.

But there is no time to savor the victory. Moog can see the Habs in his sleep and, 20 hours later, he doesn't need to use his imagination. There they are again—up close and personal. They have been embarrassed by these upstarts and they are determined.

It is still early, a scoreless game, when Brian Engblom of the Canadiens shoots. The puck bounces off a leg and suddenly it is on Doug Jarvis' stick, to the left of Moog. Damn. He is out of position. Jarvis shoots high, Moog launches himself at the puck in desperation and makes the save.

He can feel the astonishment in the crowd. And as he straightens up, he looks right at the Montreal bench. He can see the disbelief on their faces and he knows the night is his. Moog stops 40 shots before it is over and the Oilers win 3-1. Two nights later, in Edmonton, they sweep the series with a 6-2 triumph.

They will lose to the Islanders in a six-game quarterfinal series, with Moog distinguishing himself. Then the goaltender decided to return to the obscurity of the minors, to man the nets for the Wind in the Adams Cup playoffs. As long as they continue to ask, he'll continue to say yes. ■

JOE GERGEN is a columnist for Newsday.



IN THE SPRING, SOMEONE NOTED, A young athlete's thoughts lightly turn to ... well, outdoor sports, among other things. Just to participate is its own reward. The exuberance of competing on a sparkling May afternoon brings release from the tension of the Paper Chase. Forget the Rose Bowl and the Final Four. Winning a regatta, placing in track or showing emotion in lacrosse are celebrations unto themselves. Turn the page for the start of one of the eight-oar races at last year's Dad Vail Regatta in Philadelphia.

THE RIGHTS OF SPRING

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES DRAKE





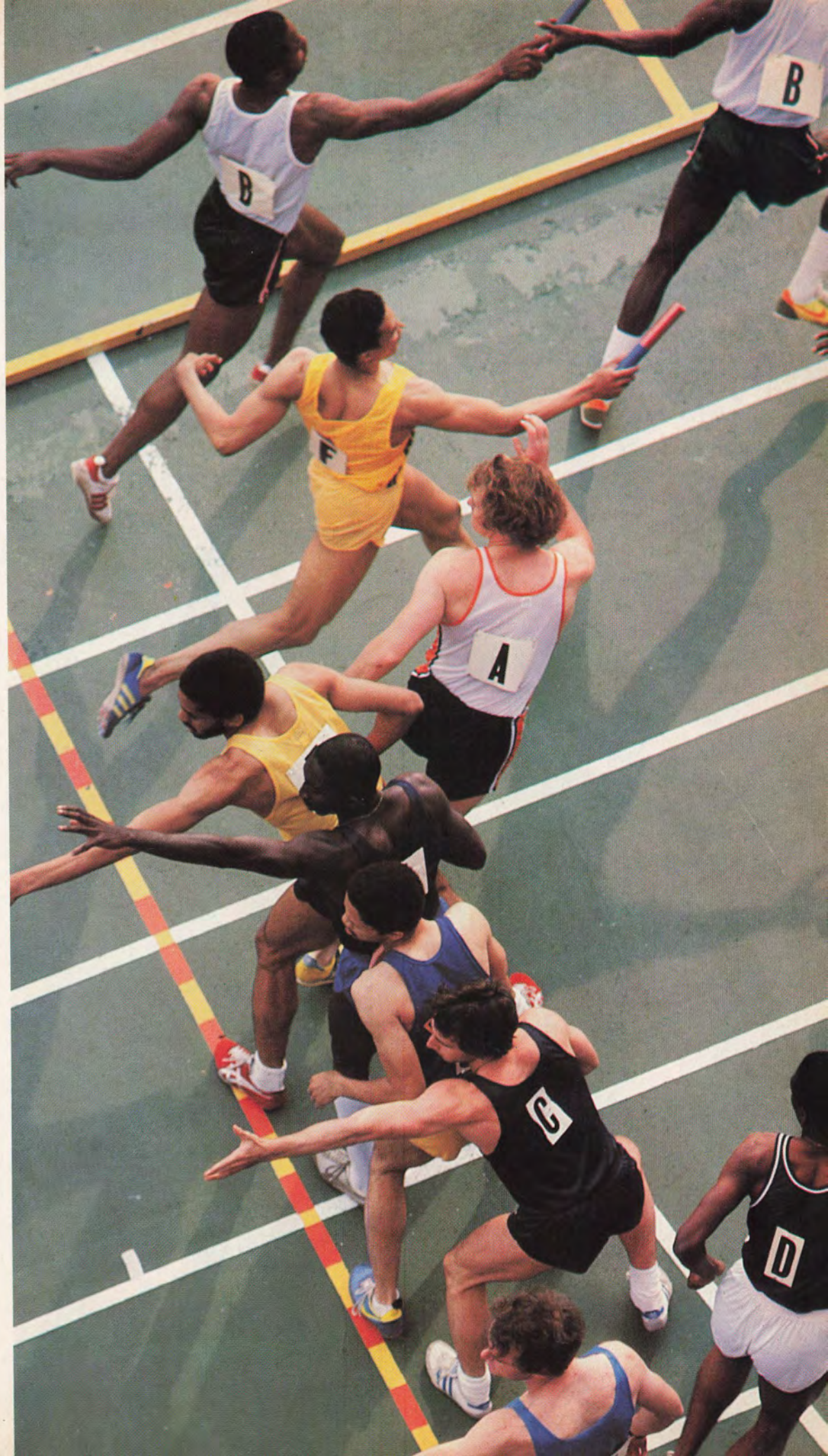
On a hot Memorial Day 1981, North Carolina finished just a step ahead of Johns Hopkins in one of the more exciting NCAA Division I lacrosse finals. Johns Hopkins has finished first or second in 8 of the 11 championships. More than 4,200 men and 2,500 women play college lacrosse.







A race is often won—or lost—with the baton pass. E strains for E and B for B at last year's Penn Relays, the country's grandest track carnival. More than 6,000 college, elementary and high school runners competed. At the AIAW lacrosse championships (next page), Temple and Ursinus played it close in a semifinal game.









IT AIN'T HEAVY, IT'S MY REFRIGERATOR

The lore and legend of trashsports • By Vic Ziegel



THE GOLDEN AGE OF TRASHsports is over. Hollywood Stunt Men. Vanished. *The Challenge of the Sexes*. Exhausted. The World Series of Poker. Folded. Pass. Three cards. I'll play these. America's Meanest Latin Teachers. *Requiescat in pace*. The NFL Cheerleaders Competition. Poof, gone, just like Amos 'n' Andy, Buffalo Bob, Cecil (the seasick sea serpent), Dizzy Dean, e, f, g, h, I could go on all day.

How many accepted the challenge

and began reciting the rest of the alphabet? Ever notice how many round letters there are just after n? For those folks, we have wonderful news.

Trash may be down, but you can't sweep it out. As long as people sit in front of television sets, rooting for motorcycles, thrilling to the sight of a fat Minnesotan circling a billiard table, trashsports will endure. But these are difficult times. The privileged pantywaists of programming are calling the camera shots.

So the International Sled Dog

championship at Saranac Lake, New York, is ignored; underwater hockey players, diving to the bottom of pools to slap at brass pucks, worried sick that their eardrums may burst, aren't attracting network time. Where is the discerning broadcast executive who will step forward and say, "Yes, give me shuffleboard"?

The golden age is indeed over, passed into history about 8 a.m. July 31, 1981, in the Hotel Toronto coffee shop. The baseball season was on hold because of the strike and NBC, with-

Illustrations by Arnold Roth



out the usual nine innings every Saturday, needed something, anything, to fill the hole in its schedule. Karate from Atlantic City, motorbikes from Belgium, horse racing from Ireland, bicycles from France, auto racing from anywhere. The package was called *Summer Season*.

One Florida-based businessman, Mike Hannan, was still thinking baseball. Why not a home-run-hitting contest? He rented Toronto's Exhibition Stadium for two days, covered the cost of converting the field for baseball use after a Canadian pro football game, paid the traveling expenses for two six-player teams from the American and National Leagues (George Foster, Mike Schmidt, Eddie Murray, Dave Parker, etc.), purchased thousands of baseballs, secured pitchers, advertised the event and printed and sold tickets for the Baseball Home-Run Classic.

The bubble-gum-blowing contest was a lot of hot air.

Mike Trager, who represented Hannan, had no trouble signing with NBC because "they were looking for properties and they were amenable to baseball-related things."

It was at breakfast, before batting practice the first day, that the players learned the strike was over. They were told to forget about make-believe home runs, to return home. The promoter, in the red for an estimated \$25,000, picked up a few bucks by selling his supply of baseballs in Canada. The golden age of trashsports never made it back across the border.

"The first challenge in front of us is to rehabilitate our anthology broadcast, now known as *Sports Spectacular*. We are getting out of the trash-

sports business as quickly as we can work off contracts. We are no longer going to have motorcyclists moving walls with their faces."

Van Gordon Sauter, now head of CBS News, made those promises in 1980 at the start of his 16-month reign as president of CBS Sports. His terrible swift sword chopped away \$3 million worth of shows. That left another \$2 million, Sauter said, that CBS couldn't dump into lawn and leaf bags. Just not enough in the budget to replace those shows. So CBS still thrills us with the Acapulco cliff divers and the World's Greatest Pool Players. But when those contracts are done? CBS picked up an NCAA football package as well as college basketball. Toot-toot-trashy, goodbye.

How different their voice sounded when Eddie Einhorn was the executive producer in charge of weekends. Ein-

horn, crowing about CBS' first ratings victory over ABC's *Wide World of Sports*. And when asked to reveal his programming strategy, he turned up his palms and said, "Our crap was better than their crap."

When I mentioned trashsports at NBC, nobody gave me high fives. "I'm not wild about the term," said Sean McManus, director of program development for NBC Sports. His term? "Diversionary competition."

One such competition that NBC acquired, after CBS kicked it out, is *World's Strongest Men*. That's the one with the refrigerator carry. A trash classic. "It upset people," says Peter Tortorici, who buys programming for CBS' sports anthology. "They didn't like seeing some big guys lifting A-manas while the Stanley Cup finals couldn't get on television."

Why is *World's Strongest Men* better TV than the Stanley Cup? Because you can't chop the hockey game into four six-minute segments with three commercials. And there's no need to broadcast *Strongest Men* live. The event is usually taped months earlier and, since it's trash, sits in the can.

That doesn't mean trash is alive and well at NBC. The network pulled the

plug on the refrigerators. "We were sensitive about it," McManus admits. "We took it out because of the negative aspect, the carnival atmosphere, because it was too heavily identified with trashsports." What NBC is hoping to do with the *World's Strongest Men*, McManus says, is make it "as respectable as we can."

Another stunt, the strong boys lifting a platform loaded down with Playboy bunnies, was also cut. "Too exploitive," McManus explains. There are no plans to rename the competition *World's Biggest Pussycats*.

A network spokesman for ABC came close to tears when I used the words trash and *Battle of the Network Stars* in the same conversation. "ABC goes after proven championship events," he let me know. Imagine my surprise when I received this press release from the network of proven championship events:

"Coverage of the World Wrist Wrestling Championships from Petaluma, California, and the International Tandem Surfing Championships from

Oahu, Hawaii, replace the World Men's Gymnastics Championships on ABC's *Wide World of Sports*, Saturday, February 20."

ABC, three little letters that drove Einhorn wild. "They give you this thing, 'The Network of the Olympics,' and they throw it at you, day after day. 'Recognized around the world as the leader in sports television.' Day after day. I used to say about our show that it was recognized as the leader in sports television around our office. They have gotten their image across so well that you don't realize what their programming is in the first quarter [January through March] that leads everybody. They don't have one legitimate, major league sport. Superstars, *Wide World*, country vs. country in gymnastics, which is a created-for-television thing, and bowling. And that's all. It's amazing how they've palmed that off on the American public. But they have an image and we could never get that at CBS."

You don't have to be Bruce Jenner to understand what makes these networks so touchy, touchy. Trash is not a pleasant word. *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary* defines it as any waste or worthless matter; good-

Ohlmeyer declines credit for the Buffalo-Chip-Tossing contest.



for-nothing stuff; rubbish; refuse; dregs. "Who steals my purse, steals the National Logrolling Championships." Billy Shakespeare wrote that.

Not long ago, the networks were awash in trash. And in love with every sponge-rubber ducky they launched. Remember the Joe Garagiola/Bazooka Big League Gum Blowing Championship? The idea was to find a team winner, a league champion and, finally, the Babe Ruth of blow.

The rules were as marvelous as the competition. Here they are, in a letter sent August 12, 1975, from Topps Chewing Gum vice-president Sy Berger to major league public relations directors:

"The player will be given one hour to condition the bubble gum prior to competition. No special ingredients may be added to the bubble gum. No mechanical devices may be used to soften the bubble gum.

■ "Remember . . . bubbles aren't always circular. When judging, the bubble should be measured at the longest or widest points.

■ "Arrange with the player for him to signal [such as a wink of the eye] when he wants the bubble measured.

■ "IMPORTANT: It seems that even the slightest wind has an effect. Therefore, we advise holding the competition indoors."

On August 15, this follow-up bulletin from Bazooka:

■ "Make sure that you have judges who will at least look upon this seriously, and understand that they have a true function. [An earlier communique had suggested that the judge be "a responsible person, such as a team executive . . . or a local clergyman."]

■ "The best way to measure is to open the calipers and have the player blow his bubble into the open area. The calipers should not touch the bubble, but should be opened and closed in keeping with the size of the bubble. Unfortunately, the bubble does not last too long.

■ "In case of a tie, there are two ways to handle it: a) Have a sudden death, with each player entitled to one bubble. The biggest one wins, OR . . . b) the winner to be determined on the second largest bubble of his three tries."

When the Yankees went for their MVB, there was a blowoff between Jim "Catfish" Hunter and Walt "No-Neck" Williams. The drama—the future Hall of Famer against the 25th neck on the team—almost overwhelmed Marty Appel, the Yankees' PR man and bubble judge.

"The pressure was intense," he said. "There's a real trick to measuring a bubble without popping it. Those damn bubbles don't just sit there and wait for you to measure them. They quiver." No-Neck outblew Catfish.

By then, the competition was heating up, and a Mailgram was sent to each club August 19: "Detroit has canceled out of the contest. Therefore, the Milwaukee Brewers will advance to the quarterfinals as a result of a forfeit. In addition . . . the gauge [of new calipers] has been increased from 11 inches to 16 inches. This was prompted by Johnny Bench blowing a 13-inch bubble and word that Rick Rhoden might even do better."

The scouts were wrong on Rhoden. And Bench was incapable of producing another monster. When NBC producer Ginny Seipt taped the finals, Milwaukee's Kurt Bevacqua out-bubbled Johnny Oates of the Phillies.

WE DIDN'T KNOW WE were guilty of watching trashsports until 1974, when William Leggett began staring at too much television for *Sports Illustrated*. He recalled when Sundays in the winter were devoted to professional basketball and golf tournaments. Period. When the happiest hours of his life were spent waiting for Jack Nicklaus to line up a putt. Then somebody discovered a track on Islip, Long Island, where people beat up on jalopies. Demolition Derby. "The audience was 2,000 people sitting on the hoods of parked cars," Leggett says. "You never had to go to Islip. Now, because of television, Islip was coming to you."

He didn't lash out until the magazine asked for a piece on Superstars. "That was the one that really infuriated me," Leggett says. "I didn't want to see athletes fall down riding bicycles. Or baseball players swim. Or Willie Stargell climb a wall. Basically, I got sick and tired of Superstars." Not so tired that he couldn't write a column. Superstars, my vertical hold, he snorted. "TrashSport," he called it. A genre was born.

The television people were not amused. "What a lot of crap," says Don Ohlmeyer, executive producer of NBC Sports. "It's like criticizing a newspaper for running cartoons and comic strips." Ohlmeyer was the first director for Superstars. He took that assignment as seriously as the athletes did. *Seriously*. "They always try to win and the events aren't fixed," Ohlmeyer says. The ratings told him "the view-

ers were interested in the results. We were kicking the hell out of golf, tennis and the NBA and that drove sports-writers crazy. Were we somehow jeopardizing the integrity of our youth by letting them watch something as deleterious as Superstars? Who's to say there's something sacrosanct about 22 grown men in shoulder pads beating each other every Sunday? When Dr. Naismith invented basketball, somebody probably wrote that it was absurd to throw a ball into a peach basket at the YMCA."

Ohlmeyer delivered that speech as if he had a rotten phone connection to Saturn. When he was executive producer for a prime-time show called *Games People Play*, he gave us a tug-of-war between groups of teamsters and iron workers. "If you think that's trash, fine," Ohlmeyer says, "but *you* tell that to the teamsters. Are you going to say that something's trash just because they don't use a Wilson glove or a Rawlings ball and they don't have a commissioner on Park Avenue?"

Superstars, at the beginning, had only Dick Button, the Olympic champion figure skater, winner of the 1949 Sullivan Award, presented by the AAU to the year's outstanding amateur athlete. Button couldn't help remembering that when he played baseball at the Englewood School for Boys in New Jersey, "the outfield sat down when I came to bat. There were 12 boys in my class and 10 were better athletes than I was."

So who was better? Best? Super? Mays or Mantle? Wilt or Russell? Could Johnny Campo knock out Big Bill Tilden? Does Pete Rose swim faster than Secretariat? "The idea germinated for 15 years," Button says. But it wasn't until ABC lost the NBA contract to CBS, and had a Sunday afternoon hole to fill, that Button was able to move Superstars.

The prime mover was Barry Frank, an ABC alumnus who was selling events for Trans World International, sports packagers. Frank says he spent four hours on a golf course with his old boss, Roone Arledge, ABC Sports president, talking up Superstars. Frank promised genuine superstars for Superstars. "Give us 30 days," he said. "If we get the athletes we're after, do we have a show?" Arledge nodded. Or moved his head while he was putting. Frank came up with enough of the right names, inside the time limit, and now says, "ABC was dragged into it, kicking and screaming."

Frank found a friend in real estate, who was pushing a new community,



Rotunda, Florida. So new, Frank says, "that when we flew over in a helicopter, it was barren. I mean, *barren*." Which was fine for the outdoor events and camera locations, but where would they hold the bowling? At the community center, Frank was told, his host indicating a series of stakes driven into the ground, a length of string connecting each stake. Frank realized he was looking at about 90 feet of string.

"We need 120 feet for the bowling alley," he said. Just like that, someone picked up a stake, began walking with it, "and the community center grew by 30 feet."

This was *Superstars*' 10th season. With Frank selling brilliantly, Button's production company has parlayed *Superstars* into *World Superstars*, *Junior Superstars*, *Women's Superstars* and *Superteams*. Critics, like Leggett, don't annoy Button. "Just as long as they spell our name properly," he says.

The one burning issue to decide is who gets credit for being the father of trashsports. Several television writers say it's Ohlmeyer, and the man isn't about to argue. "To the degree that I developed *The Superstars* and *Battle of the Network Stars*, two of the more successful forms, I guess that descrip-

In television's fantasy land, dreams of future Trash.

tion wouldn't be inaccurate." What may cost Ohlmeyer votes is that he refuses to take credit for one of the more popular games his people played: The Buffalo-Chip-Tossing contest.

Frank makes a small attempt at modesty—"There hasn't been an original game since the first man kicked a rock"—but his trash credentials are too impressive to take lightly. His creations include *World's Strongest Men*, hiring hammer-throw great Hal Connolly to invent stunts like the refrigerator carry; one-on-one and three-on-three, the halftime entertainments during NBA games; the All-Racquets Championship; *Women's Body-Building*; and he sold, among many others, *The Challenge of the Sexes*. "I think I'm the father," Frank says.

Einhorn, a trash latecomer, left television last year to become a part owner of the White Sox. "I'll take credit for a lot of the crap, because there's nothing to be ashamed of. But there were some real shlockers before I ever came around. Barry Frank. To me, he was the king of the shlockers."

Where does that leave Button? "I

invented it," he says. "Barry Frank did a tremendous amount of work, but he didn't create it. A better description for him would be 'midwife of trashsports.' Am I the father? Call me anything you want. Just spell my name properly."

If Bernie Sandler had a vote, his choice would be Frank. Sandler was a Los Angeles agent when he called Frank several years ago, a stranger pitching his idea over 3,000 miles of telephone wire. This is what Sandler said after he introduced himself: "I hear you can sell the networks anything from cat-screwing on up."

Sandler's scheme was *NFL Wrist Wrestling*. He didn't have the football players, didn't have a site, didn't know the rules of the game, didn't have a table to put their elbows on. What he did have was Frank's ear.

"I'll call you right back," Sandler recalls Frank saying. "Two hours later he sold it to CBS for 26 shows." Never mind that *NFL Wrist Wrestling* only ran one season. "They tied me together with *NFL Films*," Sandler says, explaining the show's short life. "When the matches ended too quickly, we had to fill the space by watching films of them playing football. I couldn't help it."

Sandler and Frank teamed up again for Hollywood Stunt Men. Stunt men diving off burning roofs, stunt men running through fire, stunt men riding motorcycles through fire, stunt men escaping from exploding cars. "We did a lot of fire," Sandler says.

A large portion of Sandler's suggested trash was swept out of sight. The First Annual American Indian Games, "a competition between the five major tribal groups," Sandler says. He claims he had a go-ahead from the National Tribal Council but CBS didn't come up with enough money. One event, according to Sandler, would have been a 100-yard dash, with the Indian contestants racing directly at each other. The loser peels off.

Sandler struck out with major league baseball players against the world's best women softball players. "The men would have lost [in softball]," he's certain. The AM-PM Olympics, a competition between soap-opera stars and prime-time stars. The Generation Gap Olympics, kids under 15 against adults "in speed events like taking out the garbage." The National Truckers Rodeo, "with trucks replacing horses and steers." And Quarterback Countdown—NFL quarterbacks hitting mechanical targets, guarded by mechanical defenders. "We had a guy all set to build the targets," Sandler says. No sale.

A daring concept at the networks, one that strikes at the heart of trash, is journalism. At ABC, it's a full half-hour of Howard Cosell's *Sportsbeat*. NBC and CBS keep promising more and more. Barry Frank laughs. Ha.

Well, first he laughs, then he sounds like an angry father when he says, "Journalism isn't working. As Rooney says, 'We're a nation that wants to see somebody win and lose.' Sports journalism doesn't give you anybody to root for. Besides, how much do you think the networks want to piss off Pete Rozelle? There's a certain hypocrisy to say you're doing journalism when you're criticizing a league one week and negotiating contracts with it the next. Show me the last hard piece CBS did on the NBA."

Frank interrupts another question about the value of journalism against trashsports. "There's a basic honesty in my events," he says. "Television is an entertainment medium and sports is an entertainment form. Forget critics and sportswriters. I don't have to please them. And I can't help it that Bill Leggett finds it degrading. What was the last commercial minute Bill

Leggett bought? We're an easy target to criticize, but don't talk to me about the purity of sports. The real hypocrisy are these student-athletes. I believe they spend as much time in the classroom as they do on the moon. Suddenly, you've got bastions of learning like Kentucky, Duke, UCLA, playing basketball on Sunday. They're bigger whores than we are."

There are times when the networks could be accused of showing excellent taste. The fact is, they reject trash heaps each year. At CBS, Tortorici's favorite rejection note went to a ski competition. The competing skiers were pieces of furniture.

Daredevil Jimmy "The Flying Greek" Koufos was turned down by the sports departments, but may appear on *That's Incredible*. "We want more money," said Koufos' public relations man, Lyn Jeffers.

Who can blame him? Koufos is a former Los Angeles city bus driver. He brought a yellow school bus to the Charlotte (North Carolina) Motor Speedway last October in an attempt to break Evil Knievel's long-jump record of about 130 feet. A football goalpost was placed at the 130-foot mark, with junk cars beyond that point, "as a landing cushion," Jeffers said. Koufos' school bus roared off the ramp and sailed through the uprights like a yellow extra point. He landed on an old Dodge, 164 feet away. The hospital released him in an hour. "Nobody else," says the publicity man, "does buses."

POTOSI, WISCONSIN'S ST. John Mine, a lead deposit that hasn't been worked since 1870, comes to life for two days each July. The competition they wanted to sell to the networks was the National Miners' Hand Steel Drilling Championships. In the doubles, one person holds a three-foot spike against the mine wall and a partner slams it with a sledge hammer. Last year's winners drove the spike an inch. It's a distance competition. In the singles event, one spike, one sledge, one pair of long arms, the winner took a quarter-inch out of the wall. The spectators sit on planks that rest on bales of hay. At the 1981 finals, the crowd grew to 150.

Alan Bernhard has an event to offer, but the one network he contacted didn't share his vision of a Sportscaster's Olympiad. "Can John Madden run?" the proposal asked. "Can Brent Musburger swim? Can Howard Cosell do anything?" The courteous response

from Sean McManus at NBC read, "We have no plans to add a show like this to our current lineup."

And Bernhard had such magnificent plans. "Jimmy the Greek and Ron Luciano playing badminton. Statistics flashing on the screen, ballgirls, the wives watching from the stands, the whole shmeer. We'd time them going from the broadcast booth to the locker room. Everybody I talked to said they'd love to see it, except Sean McManus."

McManus is the son of Jim McKay, the ABC sportscaster. He was at the first Superstars in 1973, a 15-year-old kid hanging around his old man. That trip to Florida is a warm memory. And there I was, sitting on the other side of his desk, asking if all that trash was over.

All of a sudden, he had to clear his throat. "Not over," he said, "but..." He made another small noise in his throat and picked up a ballpoint pen. Clicked it several times before returning it to his desk. I waited for the rest of his answer. The office was as quiet as the inside of a refrigerator.

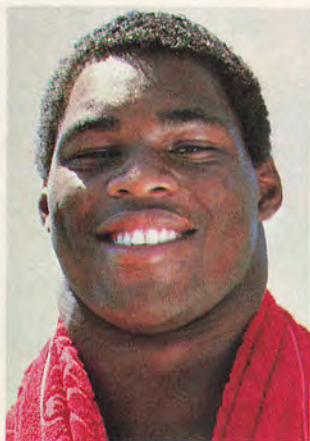
Speaking of cold and ice, we take you to Clayton, New York, site of the International Snowplowing Championship. It's a serpentine snow-covered course—850 feet—and the two-person snowplow teams tried to avoid obstacles that simulate mailboxes and telephone poles. "These are guys from places like Ohio, taking a Greyhound bus, paying their own way to compete. They're not celebrities on an ego trip," says Bob McKay, account executive for Frink's Sno-Plows.

CBS and ABC weren't interested. Probably spouting the usual nonsense about the decline of trash. Don't those bright boys in videoland know that somewhere in the world it's always 4 a.m. on ESPN? NBC asked for a tape and the advertising agency sent along a 1980 sampler. (The 1981 championships were canceled because of good weather.) NBC finally turned it down, too. The next campaign, McKay says, will be aimed at "the trade magazines that cover snowplow equipment."

Once, when trash was golden, the television cameras might have turned their way. That time may come again. Until then, how will we answer when our grandchildren ask: Where are the snowplows of yesteryear? Can a school bus outjump Big Bill Tilden? What-ever happened to the World's Strongest Networks? ■

VIC ZIEGEL is a contributing editor for New York magazine.

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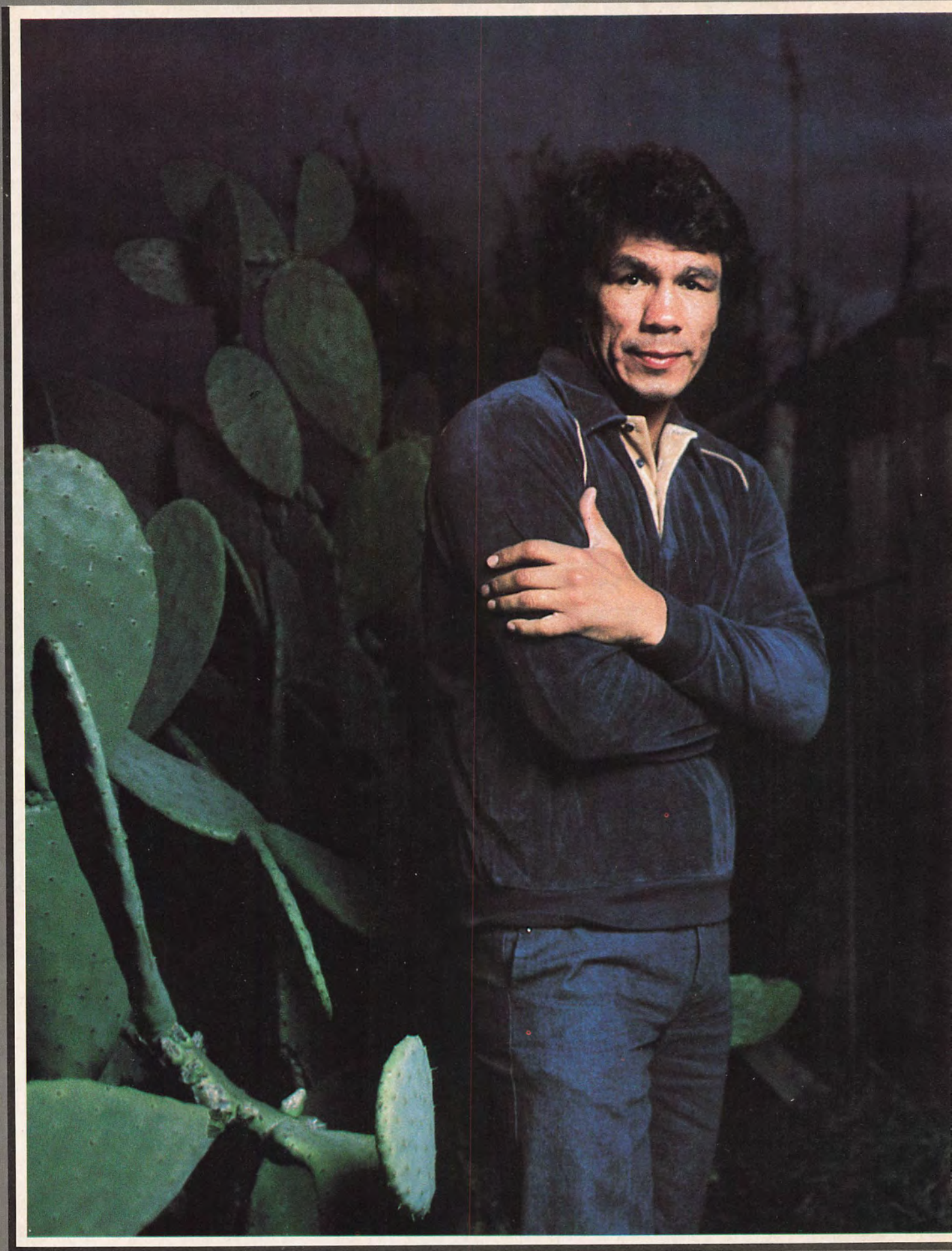
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THE CONTENDER

Four times Yaqui Lopez fought for the light-heavyweight boxing title. Four times he walked away empty-handed. Twice he dropped close decisions. Once, both eyebrows spurting blood, he narrowly lost a war with Matthew Saad Muhammad. And once he was robbed, blatantly. Now 30, his dreams somehow intact, he fights on.

BY LEONARD GARDNER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DON PETERSON

What I want to do is win that championship and defend it a couple of times and retire. I think I can get another shot. How many guys fight four times for the title and do as good as I do? I can't give up my dream. I come so close I feel sooner or later I'm going to get it. I feel I have the destiny but I didn't get the luck.

—Yaqui Lopez

ALVARO YAQUI LOPEZ, THE LIGHT-HEAVY-weight contender, was born in the Plaza de Toros San Pedro in Zacatecas, Mexico. Chenchó Casas, his cousin, grave, handsome, the father of eight children, drove me to the abandoned bullring in his cab. Large patches of whitewashed stucco had fallen away from the walls, exposing brick, stone and adobe.

"Era la casa de Alvaro," Chenchó said. We were standing in an open-air garage beside the plaza and my assumption was that the house had once stood here and had been torn down. Nearby, a man was filing steadily at the fender of a taxi. Chenchó spoke again and pointed at a low doorway in the wall of the bullring. "That was Alvaro's house," he said.

Passing between cars parked under a corrugated steel roof supported by two-by-fours, we approached the doorway. One of its double doors was missing; the other, riddled with insect holes, hung open. We looked in at a tiny dim room filled with fenders, doors, bumpers and grilles. Beyond this junk was a second cell, partially closed off by two low doors joined by a piece of wire. Through the gap between these doors nothing was visible but blackness. Yaqui was born in that back room under the seats of the bullring, and these two windowless adobe cells no more than six or seven feet square were his home for 14 years. Winters are cold in that old city 8,000 feet high on the great plateau of central Mexico, and the rooms had never been heated. The family endured winter days at home wrapped in blankets. With the front doors closed, kerosene lamps had to burn throughout the day or the rooms would have been as dark as a mine. Near the street a concrete privy and sink had served these cubbyholes burrowed into the side of the plaza. They were all vacant now. In some the rafters had collapsed.

For much of the year Raul Lopez worked the crops in California and sent money home for his wife, Raquel, and Yaqui, their only child, who was called Alvaro then. Raul made the trip north for many years, with and without papers. Once, in Chicago, he was arrested as an illegal alien and spent a year in jail. During the months he was home Raul tended bar in a *cantina* near the Plaza San Pedro.

Early in childhood Yaqui was fascinated by the mysteries of the bullring. On Sunday afternoons he saw matadors dressed in brilliant fighting suits arrive in luxurious cars. He watched well-dressed patrons parade past his door and up the stairway to the expensive seats on the shady side of the plaza. He heard the fanfares, the music, the roar that signified the entrance of a bull, heard the jeering whistles, the chorus of *olé*s, the screams when a man was tossed, and the applause. No one ever took him inside. One Sunday morning when he was eight years old, he went out at five o'clock as the bulls were being delivered to the arena and, concealing himself beside a truck, he ran with it through the gate. All day he hid in the plaza, until the spectators arrived. Then he saw all the gaudy, bloody and heroic things that accompanied the sounds he had heard for so long. After that day he had one obsession—to be a matador.

He became a regular at the bullfights. On weekdays when *toreros* and apprentices practiced in the arena, he stood by watching. Sometimes he was allowed to push the bicycle

wheel mounted with horns and padded with mattress, and sometimes he was allowed to handle a cloth and sword himself. At nine he began hitchhiking with friends to nearby bull ranches when cows were to be tested for fighting spirit prior to breeding and where he was granted his passes along with other boys and established matadors. He fought young bulls at village fiestas and entered rings as an *espontáneo*, vaulting the fence from the crowd and making passes with his jacket until he was caught and thrown out. At the Plaza San Pedro he sometimes assisted matadors, facing bulls for a few passes with the cape. He was 11 then, small and thin and dark-skinned.

One Sunday a rainstorm drove the spectators out of the plaza before the final bull was killed. The next morning a group of bullfight people gathered at the plaza. The leftover bull was let into the ring and Yaqui was to have his turn with it. He made four or five passes before the horn drove into his ankle and he was tossed into the air. He was carried out of the arena, the ankle shattered, blood pouring and bone exposed. In surgery a long incision was made, the wound cleansed of dirt and the fractures joined with pins.

That was the last time he ever fought a bull. Both his parents were working in California at the time; he was living with his uncle and aunt, but his aunt's opposition was as adamant as his mother's when she returned. Once his leg had healed, he spent his spare time in the streets selling newspapers and Popsicles and shining shoes, but this was only a time of waiting. He had not given up his ambition.

When Yaqui was 14, his father found a permanent job on a ranch near Linden in the San Joaquin Valley of California, and Yaqui and his mother made the journey by bus to join him. The family rented a small house surrounded by orchards. Yaqui sat through classes at Linden High, hoping to learn English so he could understand his teachers. He had no friends; none of the other students spoke Spanish. Unhappy, he wanted to return to Mexico. After a few months he dropped out and went to the fields. Sitting on a tractor engulfed in dust, he plowed and disked 16 hours a day. He planted seed, spread fertilizer, irrigated, picked cherries, cucumbers and apricots. When there was no local work, he traveled to nearby areas, joined crews of pickers and slept in labor camps. He loaded trucks, sprayed insecticides, chopped weeds with a short-handle hoe. Through sweltering summer days he worked in the tomato and peach harvests. In the fall he sacked walnuts. In winter rain and dense ground fog that can blot out roads, he pruned fruit trees.

Yaqui was 17 when he met Beno Cruz and her family. Paying off a red Chevrolet Impala at that time, he had been prevailed upon to drive a friend to Stockton, 10 miles from Linden. The friend had a date with one of Beno's three sisters. Beno, who nobody called Beatrice, was 14. After that night Yaqui came back frequently to the Cruz house. He still could speak no English and, as Beno's mother, Martha, was the only one in the family who spoke Spanish, Yaqui conducted his courtship by smiling at Beno and talking to her mother.

Jack Cruz, Beno's father, was a boxing promoter, matchmaker and trainer, but Yaqui had known the family a year before he asked if Cruz would train him. "If I didn't wreck my car, I don't think I would be a boxer," he said some years later. Driving home from seeing Beno one night, he ran off Linden Road and hit a walnut tree. He never did understand how it happened and his mother refused to believe he wasn't drunk. She broke a broom over his back, not, she said, because he had lost all his savings and some of hers, but because he could have killed himself. The incident convinced him it was time to leave home. In a defiant mood,



Yaqui, Yaqui, Beno, Alvaro: the home of a contender

he moved into a tank house in Stockton and began to box.

Jack Cruz, a blond, articulate, former lightweight and welterweight, had never been able to get a professional boxing license. Nearsighted, he had flunked the California commission's eye exam and so remained an amateur for 13 years. During World War II while stationed in the Philippines and New Caledonia, where there were no commissions, Cruz had 18 pro fights he had to keep quiet about when he returned to California and went on where he had left off among the amateurs. He quit when he was pushing 30. By then he was a journeyman cabinetmaker, was putting on weight, had a family and a record of more than 200 bouts. But going to the gym after work was more natural than going home, and he soon took up training fighters in partnership with Danny Dagampat.

Since his arrival in Los Angeles from Manila in 1929, Dagampat, a former amateur boxer, had specialized in Filipino talent. He had been in Speedy Dado's corner the night he outpointed the great bantamweight champion, Panama Al Brown, in a non-title bout in 1932. In the 1940s Dagampat moved to Stockton, a good fight town with a considerable Filipino population that had settled there for the farm work. Filipino against Mexican was the classic box-office formula, and over the years Dagampat imported many fine fighters from the Islands.

Benny Casing was a local boy Dagampat and Cruz developed from a 14-year-old novice to bantamweight contender, and Casing had it all: Son of a Filipino father and a Mexican mother, he could box and punch, and he could take a shot. After a dozen fights he was beating contenders. But his wife's absolute opposition to boxing took the edge off his

training, off his concentration and enthusiasm for the ring. By the time Yaqui arrived, Casing had quit fighting, got a divorce, completed a cabinet-making apprenticeship under Cruz and joined Cruz and Dagampat as a trainer.

Yaqui didn't impress any of them. "It was embarrassing," Dagampat later said. "Yaqui was falling over his own feet. I didn't want anyone to see him." Dagampat began putting him through private sessions in the back room of a barber shop downstairs from the Phelan Hotel, owned by his sister, where he still lives and works as manager. There for an hour or two every day before his regular training, Yaqui would practice shuffling around with his hands up and his left foot in front of his right foot.

After a few weeks there was an opening at his weight on an amateur card. Yaqui lost the decision but put up so rousing a battle he was actually asked for his autograph.

He still spoke no English, a lean kid, 6-2, extremely polite, with an appealing, good-natured face and a dignified bearing perhaps picked up from bullfighters. And he was game and punched straight. That's all I remember him showing in the ring, and in the way of raw material, that was a lot. The skillful blocking and ducking, the short hook, the uppercut, the combinations, the body attack, the infighting, feinting and footwork—all that would come later. In the meantime he won with what he had. He won 15 of 18 bouts within a year. After winning a Golden Gloves junior division title in San Francisco, he turned professional. He was in a hurry to make money. Casing took out the manager's license. Cruz, as a licensed matchmaker, assumed the title of adviser. With his first purse, \$150 for a six-rounder he won by decision in Stockton in 1972, Yaqui bought rings and he and Beno were married. She called him Albert. It was Cruz who gave him his ring name, Yaqui, after having entered him in an Indian amateur tournament on a reserva-

tion in Northern California, where he passed him off as a Yaqui from Mexico. Billing him now as Indian Yaqui Lopez, Cruz, following a personal dictum that, on the West Coast, the farther south you went the tougher the fighters generally were, booked him in Northern California, Nevada, Oregon and Washington until he was seasoned. Within a year he was fighting main events.

Beno had played in the gym as a baby. At 10 she was helping her father carry buckets and gloves to the fights. Her mother's brothers, Frank, Joe and Angelo Guzman, had all fought professionally and Frank had been Jack Cruz's trainer. Visiting boxers and sparring partners were sometimes guests at the house. There were always gloves, cups, headguards and posters in the family car. The kitchen table, which served as her father's office, was littered with boxing magazines, clippings and record books, and there were all the phone calls. There was all the talk of weights and rounds, records and purses, tickets and posters and cornermen, injuries and licenses and physicals and last-minute substitutes. In her teens, Beno worked with her sisters in the arena box office and took tickets at the door. And when women's boxing was sanctioned by the California State Athletic Commission, her sister, Marsha, under her uncle's guidance, had one professional bout herself. Beno understood boxing and felt at home with it, as if it were a normal and sensible line of work for her husband to take up.

"I wanted him to fight," she said. "I encouraged him. When he's winning, I love to watch him. I like boxing, especially if I know the boxer. If a boxer has talent, he's like a dancer. When Albert got listed in the top 50, I was so excited. We were so happy. I didn't get that excited when he made the top 10. But the first time I saw him get knocked down, I was scared. He was fighting Lee Mitchell and Mitchell really nailed him. That scared me. Then Albert got up and I felt sorry for Mitchell. Albert hit him some awful body shots and knocked him out."

The body shots were becoming a Lopez trademark. Danny Dagampat had him hitting tennis balls with a racket left-handed against a wall two hours a day for two years, and Yaqui developed a hook to the liver that could take the legs from an opponent. When Yaqui stopped Andy Kendall with the blow in his second year as a professional, he broke into the ratings.

"Andy Kendall hit me so hard in the belly I feel sick," he said. "I think I'm going to go down. But I remember Jack told me when I get a hard body punch to hit the guy right back to the body so he don't think I'm hurt. So I hit Andy Kendall right back hard in the liver and he go down. I knock him out. That's when I start to think, *bueno*, if I can do that, maybe I can win the title."

It was a thought that would drive him for years. For Yaqui Lopez, as for few other fighters, the title was to become not only an obsession but a phantom that disappeared with the grasping. With the exception of Jersey Joe Walcott, Yaqui was to enter a class almost unto himself, a four-time challenger who invariably came up empty-handed, yet who fought so hard, came so close, or was so clearly fleeced by the judges, that the hope and possibility of one more title shot remained alive and allowed the drive and obsession to continue.

STOCKTON, ONCE MY HOMETOWN, IS AN HOUR-and-a-half drive from San Francisco. When I arrived on the night Yaqui fought Mike Quarry, there was a crowd outside the Civic Auditorium. Quarry was one of the more skilled contenders at that time and would be Yaqui's biggest test before a home audience. It

was the first time I had seen Yaqui in the ring since the amateurs and his development was something of a revelation. His reflexes as he parried and countered, his poise and energy and the straight right that dropped Quarry in the sixth remain vivid in memory. Fighting his 27th bout, he was at a kind of pristine peak where experience and unscarred youth coincide. After he won the decision, I told him I thought he was going to win the championship.

That night he came out of the arena into the warm spring air of Stockton borne down by a noisy group of his countrymen, as his idols must have sometimes left the plaza in Zacatecas. He was bent over, moving at a dog trot, smiling in embarrassment at all this unbridled attention, his fans trotting with him, clinging to his hands and arms, hanging onto his neck and shoulders. It was May, cherries were ripe, opening the long harvest season, and a new Mexican hero had appeared.

The following year, 1976, he got his first shot at the WBC title. The champion was John Conteh. Yaqui flew into Copenhagen five days before the bout. His gym bag arrived two days later. With no equipment, he restricted his training to roadwork. But he ran at 2 a.m. because jet lag was waking him and he preferred getting up to lying sleepless. The night of the fight he felt flat and listless and was worried about being able to go the distance. Still he forced the fight and made it close, but he lacked the measure of energy that could have won it. Conteh took a split decision.

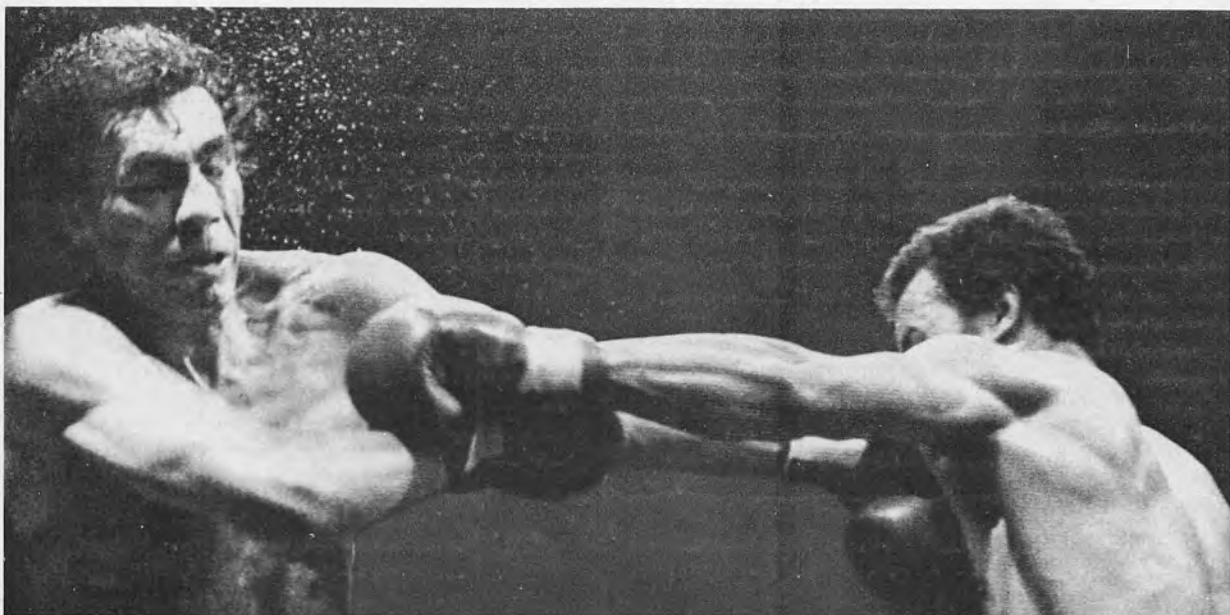
"He's still a year or two away," was Cruz's appraisal. "He got the shot too soon."

But Yaqui's showing had established him as a leading light-heavyweight and in less than a year he challenged WBA champion Victor Galindez in Rome. At 28, Galindez was a formidable fighter, a wily, durable puncher undefeated in his last 36 bouts over six years. With an advantage in reach, a brilliant left hand, exceptional footwork and the gameness to stand his ground and counter when Galindez opened up, Yaqui, through the early rounds, appeared on his way to the championship. Galindez had to know it was slipping from him. He fought viciously and tenaciously and with a philosophical lack of concern over where some of his punches landed. He came on in the last rounds and won by a split decision.

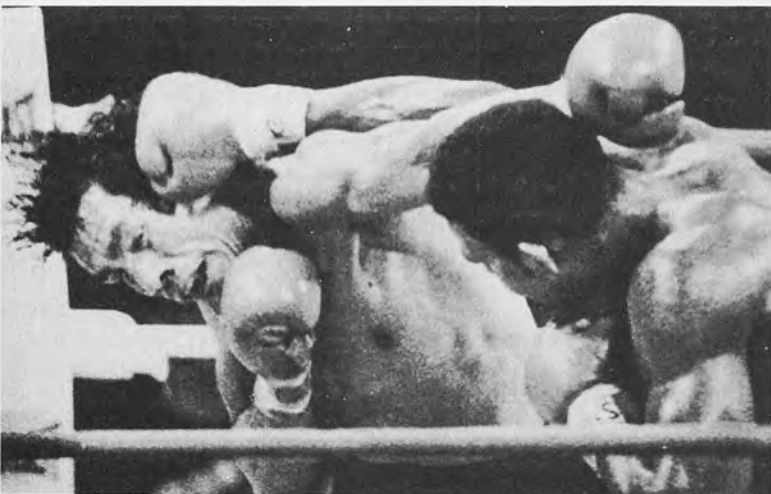
Back in Stockton, Yaqui said the low blows and rabbit punches had made him weak. He was speaking broken English at that time, his progress with the language slowed because of his success in teaching Beno Spanish, which they spoke when alone. He believed he had won anyway, as had many observers, and he thought if he kept winning, Galindez would have to fight him again. "I feel bad for a few days," he said. "But I have to make it, so I keep going."

Five months later he had won four consecutive fights by knockout when he was accepted as an opponent for Mike Rossman, who appeared all but signed as Galindez's next challenger. It was Yaqui's debut in New York, where Rossman was a popular performer, and even the referee seemed confused by the way things went. Cut early over both eyes, Yaqui went inside Rossman's punches with hooks to the body and rights to the head. In the sixth round Rossman was out on his feet, when the referee pushed the two apart as if breaking a clinch, although there was no clinch, or as if he were stopping the fight. But he did not stop it and, when he stepped back out of the way, Yaqui, fired up for a knockout, attacked again. Rossman was soon defenseless, reeling under a torrent of inspired punches. Once more the referee intervened, glanced at the clock, and this time administered a standing eight count, while Rossman stared at him with a bewildered expression as though trying to figure out where

PHOTOGRAPHS BY UPI (TOP); WIDE WORLD PHOTOS (CENTER); UPI (BOTTOM); ELISEO A. ORDAZ (RIGHT)



Against Conteh (top), Yaqui was "a year or two away." He lost a questionable decision to Galindez (left) in Italy. And he dropped "the fight of the year" to Saad Muhammad in 1980. His son Yaqui, then three, comforted him after the loss to Muhammad.



he was and what all the shouting was about. Then Yaqui resumed bouncing punches off his head. Finally the clock ran out. Rossman's handlers bounded into the ring and led him to his corner. The referee went to Yaqui's corner to ascertain the seriousness of his cuts before going to look at Rossman. But Rossman's handlers knew he was finished. After the bell for the seventh round he remained slumped on his stool.

With Rossman sidetracked, Yaqui was signed to meet Galindez in a rematch two months later at Viareggio, Italy. Working with Yaqui in the gym, Cruz, Casing and Dagampat were all relaxed and confident. They knew he could beat Galindez. Yaqui was not yet 26, a veteran of 50 bouts, in superb shape and filled with desire to fight.

Two weeks before the bout, Cruz was at a fight card in San Francisco. He looked troubled and was unable to work up any enthusiasm about Yaqui's chances. "Don't tell anybody," he said. "I don't know if he can fight. He just tore his ankle all to hell. It's swollen up the size of a melon, and it's black and blue all the way up to the calf. He can't even walk on it."

Running before daylight in Victory Park, Yaqui had stepped in a hole. It was the ankle that had been gored in Zacatecas. Cruz had phoned the promoter, Bob Arum, but Arum had refused to give him a postponement. If Yaqui was unable to fight, Galindez would fight a substitute, and there was no assurance Yaqui would ever get another match with him.

"I don't know what to do," Cruz said.

A day or two later he was more hopeful. From David Thompson, a Stockton manager, he had heard about an elderly healer from the Philippines who possessed a green powder with curative powers. Thompson took Yaqui and Cruz to him, bringing along a fifth of whiskey as requested. The old man warmed the whiskey in his mouth and spat it out on Yaqui's ankle, then rubbed in the green powder. After an hour of this some of the blackness and swelling had left the ankle, the bottle was empty and the old man was drunk.

Then Cruz consulted the trainer of the University of the Pacific football team, who told him about GELOCAST. Applied wet, the substance hardened into a thin, flexible, supportive cast. It would make the fight possible.

Yaqui made the flight to Italy with his ankle packed in ice and a chiropractor among his retinue. In Viareggio, with his ankle in the GELOCAST, he resumed running and sparring. By fight time he knew the limits of what he could do, but he went out after Galindez with all the outward assurance of a consummate poker player. All he had was his jab; the rest he bluffed. With the distribution of his weight reversed, thrust forward onto his left leg, he could get no power into his right hand and his left hook was a lost cause. "If I would try to throw hooks," he said afterwards, "I know I'm going to fall on my face." With jabs and feints he took control, put Galindez on the defensive and backed him up. It was obvious Galindez knew nothing about the ankle, which might have buckled if he had forced Yaqui backwards. Galindez moved away, covering, waiting for openings for counters, but when he did lash out, Yaqui, boxing with the utmost discipline, fended off most of the blows as if his reflexes had been heightened by his injury. Galindez was unable to sustain an attack that could turn the pattern of the fight. Ineffective, he was losing his title. Angelo Dundee, a commentator for the telecast, even said he felt sorry for him. Dundee and his partners, Gil Clancy and Tom Brookshier, all spoke as if Lopez had the decision cinched. Dundee would later say he thought Lopez had taken at least 10

rounds, the kind of margin he had thought Yaqui might need to get a decision in Italy, where Galindez was well-connected. Dundee's team had been prepared to interview a new champion that day. Yaqui was asked to remain in the ring after the decision. "You won it," Casing told him.

But the decision was agonizingly slow in coming and Cruz grew more and more uneasy. As in a game of three-card monte, the sure thing vanished once the judges' cards were turned over. It was one of the most shameful robberies in recent years. Announced as the winner, Galindez, his eyes swollen half shut, cheered up immediately. "He was the most surprised one there," Cruz said.

Spending the next few weeks with his ankle in a plaster cast, Yaqui had the dubious satisfaction of seeing himself described in the sports pages as the uncrowned champion. "I cry after the fight," he said. "I'm mad at the officials, I think maybe they get paid off, but what can you do? I'm depressed for a while, but I know I win. I feel like I'm the champion, only without the money and without the crown. I know I can win it now, so I have to get it next time."

Cruz MOUNTED A CAMPAIGN FOR A REMATCH, soliciting support from sportswriters and boxing people like Madison Square Garden matchmaker Teddy Brenner, in whose opinion Galindez had won only a single round. But the WBA refused to order a rematch. Galindez fought Rossman instead and lost his title on cuts. A Rossman defense against Lopez would then have been a natural. The WBA, however, put its weight behind a Rossman-Galindez rematch and, when it came about, Galindez won back the championship.

Yaqui went on fighting, trying to regain No. 1 contender status. Two months after the robbery in Viareggio, his ankle still swollen and his face covered with blood, he defeated Jesse Burnett in 15 rounds in Stockton for the U.S. title, which he lost less than four months later to Matthew Saad Muhammad on an 11-round TKO after his ankle went out, his eye was thumbed closed and he was cut over both eyes. It was two years before he got a fourth shot at the perpetually divided championship, this time the WBC version, which Saad Muhammad had gone on to win. The fight, in McAfee, New Jersey, in the summer of 1980, was probably Yaqui's greatest. But once again his training was not without its crisis.

Nine days before the bout Yaqui was cut in the gym. Mike Quarry, trying to get in shape for a comeback, had come to Stockton to spar with him and their workouts had turned into wars. During one exchange Quarry's thumb drove in under Yaqui's headguard. Quarry stopped fighting then and pointed with his glove, and Yaqui, seeing the blood, turned away, cursing and kicking the ropes. Cruz hustled out a local reporter, assuring him it was only a scratch, but it was a deep, serious cut, and Yaqui, in the anguish of utter frustration, could hardly sit still while Casing closed it. He went home in despair, certain he would either have to pull out of the fight or, if he went on, that the cut would be quickly ripped open. That evening Hank Pericle, a friend turned trainer, came over with a jar of veterinary-grade DMSO salve from Mexico. On a program of frequent applications of the salve, the cut began to heal with remarkable speed. "You could feel that it was healing deep," Pericle said.

"Bring everything," Cruz said. "Bring Quarry, bring the training gloves, bring all the equipment like nothing's happened, and we'll let the commission doctor decide whether the fight goes on."

So it was a closed gym at the Playboy Club in McAfee

and every day they carried in the big gloves and the headguards, and Quarry came along as if to box, but Yaqui never sparred again. Two days before the fight the soreness was gone and the cut seemed healed. Beno brushed on mascara where part of the eyebrow had been shaved, and the fresh scar looked no different from all the other thin scars that lay in a network over Yaqui's thickened lids and brows. At the physical it went unnoticed.

The cut re-opened in the third round and from then until the eighth Yaqui and Muhammad fought with a sustained ferocity not often seen in the ring. Setting a fast pace, attacking with all the determination of one long denied, Yaqui was building a big lead. Moving in and out and from side to side, he was peppering Muhammad with jabs and slamming him with combinations. It was a peak performance, but Muhammad was staying with him, each man battling with extraordinary fire, courage and toughness. As the rounds passed it was clear that a great fight was taking place.

In the eighth round Yaqui's other brow was cut and the pace intensified. Hit hard, he went into the ropes and Muhammad, far behind on points, came in swinging for a knockout. In a grim exchange Yaqui stunned him. He was on Muhammad in an instant. Muhammad tried to cover as Yaqui ripped into him with an astonishing series of punches, consumed by the will to finish him now that he had him hurt. It was a galvanizing attack, but very costly. Muhammad was rocked and battered by dozens of blows but at the bell he was still standing and even fighting back. Knowing Yaqui had given too much, Casing advised him to draw back and box in order to recover strength, but Yaqui never regained dominance.

In the 14th round Yaqui, exhausted, went down from the impact of an uppercut he actually blocked. When he rose, a left hook square on the jaw dropped him again. Never one for clinching, he got up and tried to fight Muhammad off. He took a flurry of punches and slumped to the canvas. Again he rose and Muhammad knocked him down a fourth time. Once more Yaqui got up and it seemed he would go on getting up as long as Muhammad kept knocking him down, but at that point the referee was standing in front of him, waving his arms, and it was over.

Beno, who had given birth to their second child two weeks before, was at ringside with Cruz, her eyes closed.

Back in the hotel room following a meeting with the press Saad Muhammad had been too tired to attend, Yaqui lay down on the bed in dejection. "I'd never seen him like that before," Beno said afterwards. "He didn't want to talk. He said he just wanted to sleep. I was scared because he got knocked out. I didn't want him to lie down. I was afraid if he went to sleep, something might happen and we wouldn't know about it. I wanted him to move, in case he had a blood clot. So I made him get up and go for a walk. We walked around the hotel and golf course, we played pool and pinball, and he started feeling better because everywhere we went people kept coming up and congratulating him and telling him things like it was the best fight they'd ever seen and how he ought to be champion."

The \$40,000 was consolation, too, and it was consolation when *The Ring* named the bout the fight of the year and singled out the eighth round as the most memorable of all rounds fought in 1980. It was a round Yaqui was going to reflect on for a long time to come. "I think my dream is coming true," he said. "I think he's going to fall. I just got cut and I been screwed so many times, so I go for broke. But I don't get him."

"He fought a perfect fight except for the pace," Casing

said. "He punched himself out trying to stop him."

YAQUI AND BENO AND THEIR TWO SONS, YAQUI, five, and Alvaro, now almost two, live in a small house a block from the Del Monte cannery on the eastern edge of Stockton, an old working class neighborhood without sidewalks, where there are still a few windmills and tank houses, and roosters crow in the morning. Set low to the ground, the house has been covered with yellow vinyl siding, shaped and textured to resemble boards, of a type used on mobile homes. Dominating the backyard are several large nopales cacti like those that grow by the millions in the high desert around Zacatecas. In the front yard—enclosed by a waist-high chain-link fence—is a combination swing and slide called a Gym Dandy. It is not the kind of home champions pose in front of in photos run in sports magazines. It is the home of a contender, of an unpretentious family avoiding indebtedness. Just after their marriage, Yaqui and Beno bought it for \$7,500 from an old friend of Beno's family, making the down payment with a loan from Yaqui's mother and a small settlement Beno had been awarded as a child after being hit by a car. For four years Yaqui's parents lived with them. During that time, with his ring earnings and seasonal wages as a cannery forklift driver, Yaqui paid the house off. He then bought a nearby house for his parents.

"I like it here," Yaqui said. "I'm happy without a lot of money. But if I win the championship, I would buy us a new house."

"I don't want a new house," Beno said. "This is good enough for us. Friends say, 'Why do you live out here? Why don't you buy a new house out north?' But I want to stay here. I don't want him to have to fight longer than he should just to pay off a lot of bills. I wouldn't tell him to quit, because then he'd throw it up to me, 'I could have made it if it weren't for you.' But I want him to be able to get out when he wants to. We pay cash for everything. We bought the TV set after he fought Kendall. We bought the video recorder after the first Galindez fight. We bought the Ford after Conteh. We bought the rental house after Rossman. I don't want us to get careless with money."

Yaqui smiled. "She's afraid I'm going to lose it all at the chicken fights."

"It's okay if he loses a little. That's his way of relaxing. I don't worry about him losing big money at the chicken fights. He knows he works too hard for it."

Yaqui said if he got to be champion he wanted to buy a farm. "I like to have maybe 30 acres or so, grow some cherries and tomatoes. Then when I retire I work hard. If I was rich, I would still get up about five o'clock, go jog, work eight hours. It feels good. You have to hustle to be a farmer. And I have to support my family. I want to show my boys how to work. They can have whatever they want if they learn to work. A lot of young guys don't want to work. If they were in Mexico, they would die."

The baby lay in a crib under a shelf of garish trophies conferring claim to the California state light-heavyweight title, the U.S. title and, the most extravagant of all, the Nevada state title. Yaqui rose from the couch, went into the kitchen and came back with a bottle of drops. He tilted his head and inserted the dropper into his ear. Two years earlier a young Nigerian named Bash Ali had hooked him with an open glove and broken his eardrum. It had been an easy fight. According to the doctor, the eardrum was supposed to heal. Yaqui has been fighting with cotton in the ear ever since.

"I get it fixed when I retire," he said.

Then he went on to tell about his plastic surgery. Two years earlier he had gone to Mexico City for the removal of some lumpy, troublesome scar tissue above his eyes. "They never open up again. The doctor, *bueno*, he do a good job. Salvador Sanchez's manager recommend him to me. He do Olivares, Castillo, Herrera, Norton, Palomino, Arguello. He's one of the best. He work in the juvenile hall in Mexico and he do it right there in the infirmary with kids running in and out. He use a double-edge razor blade."

The surgeon had removed many scars, ending up with a single incision over each eye. Yaqui, under a local anesthetic, had been on the table nearly three hours. "He ask me, 'You want me to take the scars off your nose, too?' I tell him, 'No, those are my memories. You better leave some on.'" Yaqui still had plenty to remember when he looked in the mirror.

"Scars don't bother me," Beno said. "He's still the same man."

"You ought to see my mother," Yaqui said. "When she see stitches in my face, she cry, she say, 'Why you have to be a fighter?'"

"His mother goes to all his fights here and cries."

"Beno and my mother light candles for me. They pray."

"But I don't worry," Beno insisted. "I know he's always in shape. I only worry when the fight's going on, if he's behind or if he's cut. Otherwise it's just routine."

"I have to close it all out," Yaqui said. "I got a lot of control . . . over my thoughts, my hunger. I have to keep my mind on my goal."

THE GYM ON MARKET STREET IS IN AN OLD storefront with leopard-skin print curtains over the windows, in a block that barely escaped demolition when Stockton's skid row was razed a decade ago. Down the block are two bars reminiscent of the old days when Market, Center and El Dorado Streets on summer evenings teemed with men back from the fields; and sometimes now a drunk wanders into the gym—which has no sign and apparently no name—and sits on one of the carpet-covered benches or worn out sofas or easy chairs arranged on two sides of the main ring. But this is a place of work, discipline and study, and visitors looking for somewhere to nap are not encouraged. The seats are for the serious observers, mostly Filipinos getting on in years who come every afternoon as to a private club to watch with solemn concentration, converse in Tagalog, and smoke strong cigars. It is a long room with two rings, their grimy canvases spotted with blood. The green ceiling is badly water-stained and great patches of plaster have fallen away, revealing lathes and a dismal history of the plumbing of the City Hotel which occupies the floor above. On the walls are posters bearing the names of local main eventers, present and past: Rudy Villagonza, Danny Kid, Benny Casing, Rudy Barro, Fel Clemente, Johnny Sato and, most in evidence, Yaqui Lopez.

Wearing red wool trunks, a T-shirt and a nylon jacket, Yaqui was shadowboxing, stepping around quickly, dripping sweat, blowing loudly through his nose as his bandaged hands shot out in a blur of hooks and uppercuts accompanied by blaring disco music and thumping bags. After 69 fights he trains as zealously as ever, seven days a week, in hope of a fifth challenge for a title. After his recent knockout of Tony Mundine in Australia, the cruiserweight division, newly spawned by the WBC, is an added possibility.

The round buzzer sounded. Dagampat, slender, gracious and cheerful, looking no older than when he was untangling Yaqui's feet in the back room of the barber shop, wiped the

sweat from his fighter's face and arms with a towel.

"You never change, Danny," I said.

Casing came in on cue. "He's worn the same underwear for a week."

"Turn that jab over more," Cruz suggested. "It'll make it more cutting."

"Oh, you want me to cut them now. Why didn't you tell me before?" Yaqui gave me a look. "My father-in-law, he forget to teach me a lot of things. I think he have too many fights."

They were like three generations of a family, carrying on with banter that had been running steadily for years.

"I made you famous," Cruz reminded him.

"Now make me rich."

"If it wasn't for me, you'd be out in the fields working, with only two burritos for lunch."

"But look at my face. I walk out of the gym and the girls cross to the other side of the street."

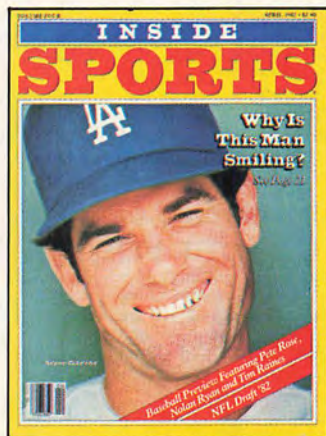
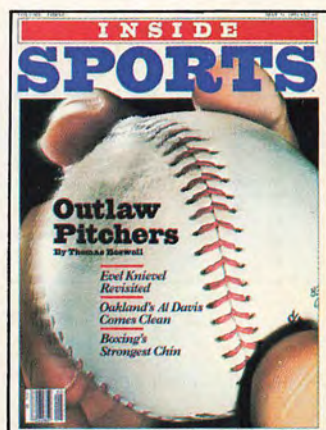
After a shower, Yaqui sat cooling off in his dressing room, which reeked pleasantly of wintergreen oil. Gloves and boxing shoes and T-shirts hung on the walls. Handwraps dangled in streamers from a curtain rod. Headguards, cups, bag gloves and jump ropes were scattered on benches, and supplies of Vaseline, liniments, gauze and tape were lined up on a shelf and in an open dresser drawer. Lately Yaqui had been working irregularly as a laborer for a construction company. Early that morning he had run three fast miles in the park. After a steam bath at the YMCA he had gone to work. Tonight after dinner he would return to the Y and play basketball. He looked contented. His face had a look of gentle, stoic, calm, as if the contending spirit had been tempered into a kind of wisdom by all the years of struggle and violently expended energy. There was a tragic aspect to it now, in its testimony of daring, sacrifice and loss.

"I want to learn as much boxing as I can," he said. "They always wanted me to box. That's what I'm supposed to do—finesse. Benny and Jack, they tell me, 'Be smart, we want you to win most of the rounds. You don't have to make an easy fight hard.' But sometimes you want to be a macho man in the ring. You fight that way, the crowd loves you more." He smiled. "I think now I just be a boxer. If I don't get a title in a year or two and I'm not filled with desire, maybe I'll quit. I don't want to be a step stone for nobody. The day I feel my legs are gone and my reflexes are gone . . . there's no use to be in the game just for the money. But if you train hard, *bueno*, you last longer. I'm always in shape. I love to train. I like to sweat, I like to move. I feel it's my work. I have to do it because I want some money for my sons. And I like to fight. I like the excitement, I like to be somebody. I feel like I'm supposed to be champion. Otherwise why I come so close? This is my chance to do something in life. I want to feel I did all I could. If I win the championship, I can say, 'Yaqui, now you did what you want. If you die tomorrow, you'll be happy.'"

But Yaqui's era is passing. Galindez is dead, killed in an auto-racing accident; Conteh is retired; Rossman burned out before he matured. Even Saad Muhammad, who Yaqui likened to a rock, has been deposed. Yaqui is 30 now and his time is getting short. His time to be champion was in 1978 when he had Galindez's number despite the sprained ankle, and it could be that those minutes he waited for the decision were all the championship he is ever going to get. ■

LEONARD GARDNER is the author of *Fat City*, a boxing novel. Jack Cruz, Benny Casing and Yaqui Lopez appeared in the film version of *Fat City*.

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Numbers

BY BILL JAMES

COMING FROM BEHIND

Don't ever count the Phillies out. Last season they led the majors by rallying for 34 victories, which represents 58 per cent of their wins. On the other extreme, the Cubs came back in only 13 games.

	Number of Runs Come Back From					
	1	2	3	4	5 or More	Total
AL						
Boston	16	5	6	4	1	32
Oakland	19	6	2	1	—	28
Chicago	17	4	1	1	2	25
Detroit	13	8	2	1	1	25
Baltimore	13	7	4	—	—	24
Milwaukee	14	6	3	—	—	23
Cleveland	10	4	4	1	1	20
California	11	4	2	2	1	20
Kansas City	9	4	4	0	2	19
Toronto	10	6	2	1	—	19
Seattle	12	6	1	—	—	19
Texas	6	7	2	2	1	18
Minnesota	9	4	2	2	—	17
New York	12	1	1	1	1	16

NL						
Philadelphia	15	11	1	7	—	34
Cincinnati	10	8	5	2	—	25
Atlanta	13	8	1	—	2	24
Los Angeles	13	4	2	2	—	21
San Francisco	11	7	1	1	—	20
San Diego	10	3	4	2	—	19
St. Louis	12	4	1	—	2	19
Pittsburgh	8	10	—	1	—	19
New York	13	3	1	—	1	18
Houston	10	4	2	—	—	16
Montreal	7	3	5	—	—	15
Chicago	6	2	3	1	1	13

BLOWING LEADS

If Gene Mauch is to win his first pennant, he'll need better pitching than the Angels had last year when they led the majors by losing 28 games in which they had the lead.

	Size of Lead Lost					
	1	2	3	4	5 or More	Total
AL						
California	17	5	5	1	—	28
Minnesota	12	6	4	1	2	25
Cleveland	14	8	1	1	1	25
Kansas City	11	5	3	2	2	23
New York	11	6	4	2	—	23
Toronto	13	5	4	—	—	22
Seattle	11	5	1	2	2	21
Chicago	13	4	2	2	—	21
Oakland	7	8	3	1	1	20
Milwaukee	11	7	—	1	1	20
Boston	12	5	2	—	1	20
Detroit	14	2	4	—	—	20
Baltimore	12	2	2	3	—	19
Texas	12	5	1	—	—	18

NL						
Chicago	16	7	1	2	1	27
San Diego	11	8	2	2	1	24
Pittsburgh	10	8	3	1	1	23
New York	14	6	2	—	—	22
Philadelphia	11	6	3	1	—	21
Montreal	14	6	—	1	—	21
San Francisco	7	7	5	1	—	20
St. Louis	11	5	2	1	1	20
Cincinnati	13	2	2	1	—	18
Atlanta	7	4	3	3	—	17
Los Angeles	6	6	3	2	—	17
Houston	6	2	2	1	2	13

THE PLEXIGLAS PRINCIPLE

The Plexiglas principle holds that all things in baseball have a powerful tendency to return to the form they previously held. If a player's batting average jumps in one year, it will usually decline in the next; if his HR total drops sharply in one season, bet on him to improve it the next. As applied to teams, note in the chart below how consistently an up (+) is followed by a down (—), and vice versa:

	1978	1979	1980	1981	Pattern
NL					
St. Louis	.426	.531	.457	.578	+ - +
Montreal	.469	.594	.556	.556	+ - ±
Philadelphia	.556	.519	.562	.451	- + -
Pittsburgh	.547	.605	.512	.451	+ - -
New York	.407	.389	.414	.398	- + -
Chicago	.488	.494	.395	.369	+ - -
Cincinnati	.571	.559	.549	.611	- - +
Los Angeles	.586	.488	.564	.573	- + +
Houston	.487	.549	.571	.555	+ + -
San Francisco	.549	.438	.466	.505	- + +
Atlanta	.426	.413	.503	.472	- + -
San Diego	.519	.422	.451	.373	- + -
AL					
Milwaukee	.574	.590	.531	.569	+ - +
Baltimore	.559	.642	.617	.562	+ - -
New York	.613	.556	.636	.551	- + -
Detroit	.531	.528	.519	.550	- - +
Boston	.607	.569	.519	.546	- - +
Cleveland	.434	.503	.494	.510	+ - +
Toronto	.366	.327	.414	.349	- + -
Oakland	.426	.333	.512	.587	- + +
Texas	.537	.512	.474	.543	- - +
Chicago	.441	.456	.438	.509	+ - +
Kansas City	.568	.525	.599	.480	- + -
California	.537	.543	.406	.464	+ - +
Seattle	.350	.414	.364	.404	+ - +
Minnesota	.451	.506	.478	.376	+ - -

RUNS CREATED

While batting average is one means of calculating a player's ability, a hitter ideally should be evaluated by his success at that which he is trying to do: create runs. By using the following equation —

$$\frac{(\text{Hits} + \text{Walks}) (\text{Total Bases})}{\text{At-Bats} + \text{Walks}} = \text{RC}$$

— an accurate estimation of a player's Runs Created can be calculated.

1981 LEADERS

	H	BB	TB	AB	RC*
Mike Schmidt	112	73	228	354	99
Dwight Evans	122	85	215	412	90
George Foster	122	51	215	414	80
Andre Dawson	119	35	218	394	78
Tom Paciorek	132	35	206	405	78
Rickey Henderson	135	64	185	423	76
Cecil Cooper	133	28	206	416	75
Eddie Murray	111	40	202	378	73
Bobby Grich	107	40	191	352	72
Bill Buckner	131	26	202	421	71

ALLTIME LEADERS

	H	BB	TB	AB	RC*
Babe Ruth, 1921	204	144	457	540	233
Babe Ruth, 1923	205	170	399	522	216
Lou Gehrig, 1927	218	109	447	584	211
Rogers Hornsby, 1922	250	65	450	623	206
Jimmie Foxx, 1932	213	116	438	585	206
Babe Ruth, 1920	172	148	388	458	205
Babe Ruth, 1927	192	138	417	540	203
Babe Ruth, 1924	200	142	391	529	199
Lou Gehrig, 1930	220	101	419	581	194
Chuck Klein, 1930	250	54	445	648	193

*RC totals for 1981 are low because of the strike.

FILLING THE PARK

If there is one player who can bring in the paying customer it's Reggie Jackson. His contract with the Angels calls for a bonus of 50¢ per fan once they reach 2.4 million fans—an average of close to 30,000 per game. The problem for Jackson is that he has performed better (during the regular season) in front of smaller crowds. Below is a breakdown of Jackson's performance before various sized crowds during the last six years.

Crowd Size	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	AVG.
Under 10,000	268	41	75	11	36	.280
10,000-19,999	630	127	205	52	160	.325
20,000-29,999	725	99	191	37	119	.263
30,000-39,999	709	118	191	42	150	.269
40,000-49,999	314	52	89	17	53	.283
50,000 and Over	201	27	48	12	34	.239

DOWN THE STRETCH

With Rollie Fingers getting 28 saves, the Brewers were 52-1 in games in which they led at the end of the seventh. The Yankees were the only AL team not to win a game in which they were behind after seven.

	Ahead After 7	Behind After 7	Tied After 7
AL EAST	W-L	W-L	W-L
Milwaukee	52-1	5-39	5-7
Baltimore	50-5	2-34	7-7
New York	51-3	0-41	8-4
Detroit	44-5	4-38	12-6
Boston	38-4	11-38	10-7
Cleveland	42-3	4-45	6-3
Toronto	29-4	3-54	5-11
AL WEST			
Oakland	49-4	8-34	7-7
Texas	43-5	7-39	7-4
Chicago	42-6	3-43	9-3
Kansas City	38-3	5-39	7-11
California	46-5	4-47	1-7
Seattle	36-7	1-49	7-9
Minnesota	33-6	4-53	4-9

From the book *The Bill James Baseball Abstract 1982* published by Ballantine Books. Copyright © 1982 by BILL JAMES.

The Good Doctor

Have two winners of the Kentucky Derby ever dated?

R. L., White Plains, New York

Genuine Risk, the second filly to win the Derby (1980), recently met Secretariat, the 1973 winner, on a blind date at Claiborne Farm in Paris, Kentucky. The handsome couple shared some feed at a chic oatery, took in a John Wayne movie (*The Horse Soldiers*) and went to Secretariat's trough for a nightcap. Genuine Risk was later seen leaving in a van. Experts said it would be about a month before it could be determined if there was any horsing around.

According to newspaper reports, George Bamberger, the new manager of the New York Mets, gave his pitchers the following advice in a spring-training talk on how to avoid the big inning: "If you give up two runs, say to yourself, 'That's all they're going to get.' Do what you have to do and I don't care if you have to cheat." What did George have in mind?

C. D., Flushing, New York

We're not certain but right after his chat, the pitchers signed up for Gaylord Perry's course, "Utilization of Expectorate in the Pitching Process."

What kind of cheering can we expect from sports crowds in 1982?

B. R., Reston, Virginia

Look for the continued ascendancy of the falsetto, a trend gaining strength for the past several years among sports and entertainment audiences. Yips, whoops, rebel yells, pig-like squeals and soprano shrieks will advance, while the old-fashioned macho roar declines to a mere whisper of its former self.

A power forward takes a pass from a guard and shoots a 16-footer. It bounces out and the center grabs the

rebound and stuffs it in. But the center is then called to the bench, where he's handed a telegram informing him that an arbitrator rejected his team's claims against the offer sheet that he signed with another team challenging the playoff bonus incentive clauses as inconsistent with the Birdsong case. Is the center a free agent and does the basket count?

D. K., Greensboro, North Carolina

The issue is premature, since the dispute relative to uniqueness can be decided only after a club matches an offer. However, after the valuation arbitration hearing, the club could either appeal on grounds of bad faith or seek negotiations toward an agreement involving money, draft choices or a designated player, which would induce the center's original team to relinquish its right of refusal. Say, have you noticed that lately you can't read the sports pages unless you have a law degree?

What's the most dangerous position in baseball?

K. D. S., Pompton Lakes, New Jersey

Bunting coach. One of the first injuries in spring training this year was to New York Yankee bunt instructor Phil "Holy Cow" Rizzuto, who suffered a broken bone in his right hand when a ball hit him while he was advising Jerry "Jumpy" Mumphy on his batting stance.

A runner slides home but misses the plate and collides with the catcher, who drops the ball as both are knocked unconscious. The pitcher rushes after the ball as the batter drags the fallen runner's body toward the plate. Just before the batter places the unconscious runner's hand on the plate, the pitcher, having retrieved the ball, tags the batter. Does the run count?

R. G., Boston, Massachusetts

No. According to the Surrogate Base-

runner Clause of the Infield Unconsciousness Rule, an unconscious or deceased baserunner may advance one base if carried by a sentient teammate who causes him to touch the base before either of them is tagged. Perhaps not surprisingly, the rule is seldom employed.

Will Reggie Jax and his fellow geriatric superstars help California move up in the standings this season?

E. T., Barstow, California

Angels, we note with sadness, are what people get to be after they die.

How long does a world championship boxing match last?

R. U., Lexington, Kentucky

Fifteen rounds. That is, unless it's on network television, in which case it lasts one.

Every year the baseball teams go back to spring training and every year some worthy manager or owner is heard to say: "This year we're stressing the fundamentals." By that, I assume, he means hitting, pitching, fielding and baserunning. So what did they stress the year before? I mean, what else is there?

J. R., Fort Worth, Texas

Some teams stress fundamentals while others emphasize basics, but the most thorough clubs address themselves to the basic fundamentals. Then there are those who favor the essentials. Still, the big thing is execution. When you get right down to it, that's the name of the game. ■

Are you among the sportlorn? Don't be ashamed. Help is now available. The Good Doctor knows all, tells some. Send your problems, questions and gripes to *The Good Doctor, Inside Sports*, 444 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10022.

The Fan

BY JOSÉ FELICIANO

Playing Baseball Lights My Fire

I shock a lot of people when I tell them I'm a big baseball fan. They want to know what a person who is blind from birth can know about the game. How can you see it? How can you play it? Well, you can. I know.

I became interested in baseball when I was about 10 years old living in New York. Roger Maris, Tony Kubek and Bobby Richardson were my heroes. When you're blind you become especially sensitive to sound. I could hear a ball hitting the glove and, from the sound of the pitch, I could tell its speed. I tuned in to the sports announcers, too. Some of them are awful. They say, "and here's the pitch," and then they leave you stranded. But announcers like Ernie Harwell, Vin Scully and Phil Rizzuto are great because they give you a complete analysis.

I catch a lot of games on TV when I'm playing on the road, but baseball is different now. The players are getting too much money not to deliver, and the fans expect too much from them. Baseball fans are like music and entertainment fans—they want you to be perfect. They don't want to know about hard times.

Still, I like the excitement. I was in Philadelphia watching the World Series on TV when the Phillies won in 1980, and you could feel the jubilation of the crowds as they poured onto the streets. Talk about complete analysis,

I could have done one from my hotel room based on just the roar I heard outside. During the World Series last year I was torn because I was a Yankee fan as a kid and now I like the Dodgers. Especially Fernando Valenzuela and Steve Garvey.

As much as I like watching the game, the real challenge for me is in

didn't see the car." What could he say?

Now I play with a bunch of friends in my backyard in California. We play the real thing, though, with a regular hardball, bat and glove. The catcher tells me when to swing. I'd never use one of those beeper things, and I tell the people I'm playing with, "Don't jive me. Pitch to me the same way you

would pitch to someone who can see." I may strike out 100 times, but when I connect, look out. Some years ago we were playing at my house and I got this pitch that I hit so hard I broke one of my ex-wife's expensive windows. I gave her the same story I gave my father, but she didn't find it amusing.

Hitting is great, but pitching is better because if the pitcher has psychological smarts he can have an edge over the batter. I've been working on my favorite pitches: knuckleball, overhand curve and sidearm slow curve. I'd love to pitch a few innings of an intra-squad game with the Dodgers or Yankees at spring training. I'd start the batter off with a fast-

ball, then come back with a knuckleball and then throw the curve. I wouldn't be consistent; I'd mix them up. I might even slip a spitter in there.

My only problem would be fielding. I'm the worst. They say, "José, José, the ball's coming your way." I look up and say, "Where, where?"

Even so, I've often thought I'd like to be a professional baseball player, a power pitcher and hitter like Babe Ruth. But given my track record for breaking things, I think I had better stay in the music industry, where a smash is something good. ■

JOSÉ FELICIANO made it to the World Series in 1968 when he sang the national anthem before Game Five in Detroit.



playing it. I enjoy proving to myself that I can do anything.

Growing up on Henry Street on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, I started off playing stickball in the streets with a Spalden and a sawed-off broom. My brother Jorge taught me to play. He never treated me like I was blind and neither did any of the other kids. As the pitcher, sometimes I'd get hit and sometimes I'd strike them out. The catcher would pound his mitt so I would know where to throw and, when it was my turn to bat, my teammates would call the bases so I would know where to run. Once I hit the ball so hard that it smashed the window of a parked car. My dad was mad when we got home, but I said, "Pop, I'm sorry. I

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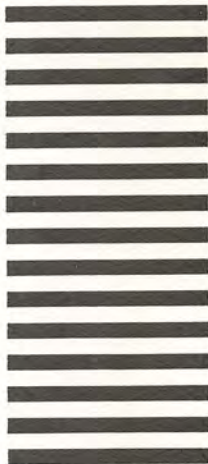
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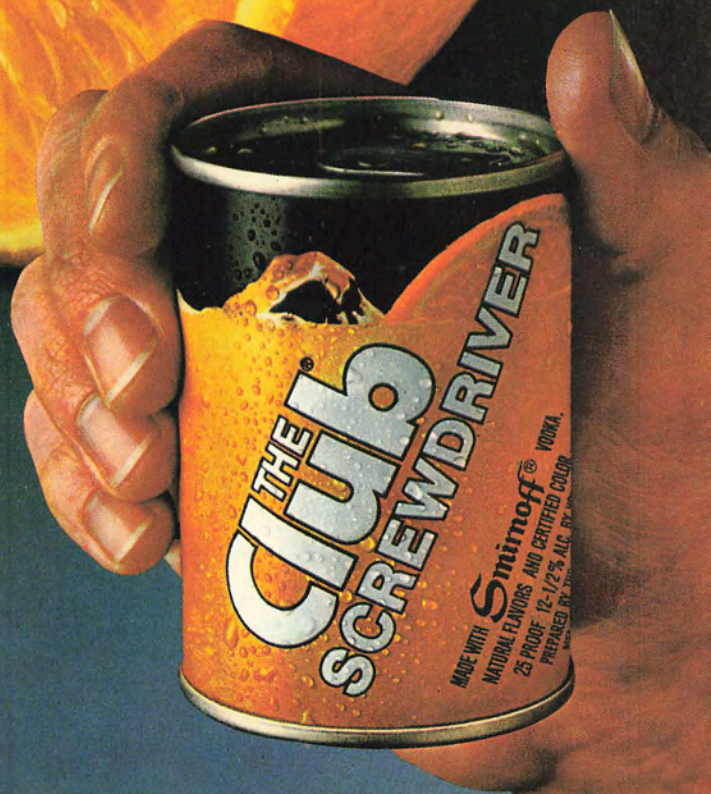


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